



## The funny thing about ethnic jokes

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Liverpool march on, pages 2 & 3

Wright to explain attack on Pleat

# THE INDEPENDENT

3,104

MONDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 1996

WEATHER Sunshine and showers

40P OR 45P

## Leadership wants to reduce the block vote as poll reveals Blair's ideal fighter Labour move to cut union power

ANTHONY BEVINS  
CHRIS BLACKHURST  
and BARRIE CLEMENT

The Labour leadership is planning further cuts in the trade-union block vote at conference, giving it a minor victory in party policy after the next election.

The controversial proposal, which is bound to aggravate union sensitivities ahead of a difficult Labour conference week in Blackpool, emerged from an *Independent* poll of candidates chosen to fight key winnable seats at the next general election.

The overwhelming majority of the

guardless of... length of service." But the unions' sensitivity about their link with the party is raw after hints, on the fringe of this month's TUC conference, that it could be severed completely.

Bill Morris of the Transport and General Workers' Union said yesterday that he would be "prepared to die" for the link with the party, "not just fight for it". Warnings also came from the right of the union movement with Ken Jackson, general secretary of the ultra-loyalist Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, declaring that the relationship between party and affiliates was in the "correct balance", and warning against carelessness.

"The Labour Party is our party too," he said, "we gave birth to it. Hundreds of thousands of ordinary trade unionists like those in the AEEU stood by it during the dark and difficult days."

John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, told BBC television's *On the Record* that the union link was guaranteed by the party constitution. But he then added: "That doesn't mean it stays the same." Asked whether there would be a further cut in the block vote - already sliced back from 90 per cent, to 70 per cent, to the present 50 per cent - Mr Prescott said: "I don't think it's a static situation. It isn't in concrete."

The latest official policy statement on the matter, from 1993, says that once individual party membership exceeded 300,000, as it now does, the balance of conference power should be changed "until the figure of 50-50 is reached". There is no mention of further change, and the results of the *Independent* poll expose the first officially hacked signal of change to come.

Forty-two of Labour's key candidates answered the telephone poll, representing almost half the 87 marginal seats Labour believes it must win to gain power.

Of those interviewed, 38 said the union vote should be curbed, three said "no", and one said "possibly". Showing singular unanimity on the covert headquarters line, most said they wanted the process of greater democratisation, started under John Smith and accelerated under Tony Blair, to continue.

On another sensitive area that has been concentrating leadership and union minds in the run-up to this week's pre-election conference - the continued provision of the universal state pension - 83 per cent of the candidates said it should remain.

The discipline of the candidates also extended to a one-note song on the

minimum wage, socialism, and proportional representation - with an overwhelming majority refusing to give a figure, backing democratic socialism, and backing the leadership line on a referendum for voting reform.

Mr Blair's leadership speech to

morrow was already being trailed in Blackpool last night. On the unions, it was said, he will argue that after 17 years' Tory confrontation, the world had to move on from the division between public and private, bosses and workers, to maximise the business potential of all the people.

**Inside**  
Class war erupts after attack on Blair  
Old tactics save the new party  
Candidates want to loosen union ties  
Page 2

candidates - 90 per cent - said they felt the unions' conference block vote should be reduced from the present 50-50 share with delegates.

But *The Independent* then discovered that they were echoing the "line" from internal briefings for candidates. Faithfully marching to the headquarters tune, the candidates exposed plans that have not been so firmly put in public before.

As the party leadership and the unions yesterday negotiated the agenda for the hard week ahead, much-predicted union rebellions were receding - although trouble could still loom on trade-union rights, railway renationalisation and child benefit.

Where unions have resisted Tony Blair's line, the leader's emissaries have managed to fudge the sensitive issues. Union leaders, for instance, refused to budge over their insistence that there should be effective rights from day one of employment.

But the actual phrase "day one" was excised from the resolution. Instead, the big unions agreed that protection should be granted to workers "re-

cently" - a term that has been used to manage the sensitive issues. Union leaders, for instance, refused to budge over their insistence that there should be effective rights from day one of employment.

On another sensitive area that has

### QUICKLY

**Crash secret**  
The Tornado fighter which crashed in Blackpool may have been involved in secret testing of stealth technology. Page 7

**Reining in drugs**  
The racing village of Lambourn in Berkshire has become the unlikely setting for large-scale drug raids. Page 2

**Taxing time for Clarke**  
Kenneth Clarke was accused of making a fresh gaffe over taxation by admitting the Tories misled voters at the last election over tax cuts. Page 4

**Veiled new world**  
Women in the Afghan capital, Kabul, woke up to find the whole culture of their city had changed overnight following the Taliban takeover of the capital. Page 11

**History destroyed**  
One of the most important archaeological discoveries found in Britain this century is being destroyed in preparation for gravel extraction. Page 5

**Polluters' peril**  
Tomorrow sees the dawn of a 10% tax which will make pollution more expensive and job creation cheaper. Page 6

## Netanyahu and Arafat will meet, says Clinton

PATRICK COCKBURN  
Jerusalem

**Inside**  
Can the White House save the peace process from destruction?  
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But Israeli and Palestinian leaders made clear yesterday how far they are from any agreement two days before they meet in Washington. Mr Netanyahu says the tunnel in Jerusalem, the opening of which has led to present crisis, will never be closed again. He said: "I don't know, would you rear down the Washington Monument or stop the Vietnam memorial if somebody says they have a problem with it?" Palestinian leaders insist that the tun-

nel must be closed. It was re-opened yesterday under tight protection from Israeli police and troops.

Emphasising that there is no understanding about what is to be discussed at the summit tomorrow, an Israeli official said: "There is only an understanding that we are going to Washington." Palestinian leaders said they did not want to attend a meeting which did not lead to Israel implementing the Oslo accords, including withdrawal from Hebron.

Rejecting any compromise, David Bar-Ilan, a senior aide of the prime minister, said that Israel might have to reconsider withdrawing from Hebron in the light of last week's violence. He said that Israel might also think about disarming 30,000 Palestinian police, an act which would certainly provoke a war.

Mr Arafat is eager for President Mubarak and King Hussein to attend the summit to put extra pressure on Mr Netanyahu. He is also nervous that the Israeli leader will make conciliatory statements but in practice refuse to implement the peace accords. Five weeks from the presidential election, Mr Clinton is unlikely to put heavy pressure on Mr Netanyahu. His White House officials are reported privately to blame for provoking the present c

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CHRIS BLACKHURST  
Westminster Correspondent

She is aged 40 to 44, is or was a teacher and is awfully proud of the way her school performed in the national league tables. Articulate, serious and earnest, she is a practising Christian, has strong family values and is a firm believer in law and order.

Deeply committed to improving the lot of her local community, she sits on the town council and devotes a large portion of her life to helping others. Small talk is not something she revels in, preferring instead to discuss how best former industrial sites can be regenerated and new jobs created.

Ambitious and competitive, she seems to enjoy matching the exacting standards of government initiatives like the Citizen's Charter and the Ofsted inspectors. Tough and uncompromising, this thoroughly modern figure makes little attempt to disguise her contempt for the left, proclaiming her public stance against its sacred icons like Arthur Scargill.

On her future hangs the fate of Tony Blair and his efforts to revitalise Labour. She is not a Tory but you could be forgiven for thinking so. In short, she is the archetypal candidate selected by Labour to fight its key seats at the next general election.

A study of Labour's Key Seat Candidate Profiles by *The Independent* reveals the remarkably similar make-up of those in which the party has entrusted its fate. Of the 87 seats in the guide, identified by Labour as the ones they must win, over half have gone to women, mostly in the 40 to 44 age group.

The changing face of Labour is clearly marked: no miners or former miners are on the list, nor

factory-workers, nobody about whom it could be safely said they once got their hands dirty.

Gone is the stereotype image of working-class Labour MPs with rough-hewn hands and broad, regional accents. A process that has been apparent in the last few general elections has moved up another gear this time round. Accountants, lawyers, management consultants, economists, full-time political activists, will, if the present opinion polls are correct, be on their way to the House of Commons. Modesty is not a premium. Lynda Clark QC is described as "the most senior woman in practice at the Scottish Bar".

Ordinary Dennis Skinner will find himself more outnumbered than ever, by people like Sally Keeble, standing in Northampton North, who tells how, as head of communications for the GMB union, she helped "shed its cloth-cap image".

Ms Keeble is typical of the few who list trade-union involvement. No shop stewards or, heaven forbid, flying pickets here but media and political advisors. She could be joined on the Labour benches by Siobhan McDonagh from Mitcham and Morden, whose entry relates how she made "a widely publicised speech attacking Arthur Scargill's attempt to re-open the Clause IV debate at the 1995 Labour conference."

They could find themselves rubbing shoulder pads with Liz Blackman from Erewash. Ms Blackman is head of the upper school at Bramcote Park Comprehensive, which she declares "achieves some of the best results in Derbyshire."

Ms Blackman is among nine of the "key candidates" to mention how they have been associated with schools with good exam or Ofsted results.

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## news

**Labour in Blackpool:** Aides of Tory and Labour leaders trade insults on origins of the species

# Attack on Blair starts class war

**ANTHONY BEVINS**  
Political Editor

Class warfare broke out between Labour and the Tories on the eve of Labour's party conference yesterday, after the Conservative Party chairman Brian Mawhinney, made a barbed remark contrasting the social backgrounds of Tony Blair and John Major.

In an clear reference to Mr Major's background in Brixton, Mr Mawhinney said that while the Prime Minister was at ease with trade union members, Mr Blair appeared to be uncon-

fortable. The point was pushed further yesterday with a report that the Tories were setting their sights on Mr Blair's "silver spoon" background: a Scottish public school and a career at the Bar. No reference was made to Mr Major's old theme that the Tories had created a classless society.

However, a senior Conservative "strategist" was quoted as saying: "Blair has never done a proper job in his life. Mr Major had to work his way up from the bottom."

The suggestion that barristers do not do a proper job of work

will dismay the many lawyers on the Conservative benches of the Commons, and Labour was incensed by the "snide" remark.

One senior Labour figure said Mr Major had left school with two O-levels, he had been unemployed at a time when there was full employment, and he then had to work hard to get a job at all. A leadership source added: "He may be the boy from Brixton, but it is the boys in the boardrooms of the privatised utilities who love him best."

It was left to John Prescott, the deputy Labour leader, to

suggest that notions of class were outdated. He said that Labour wanted to persuade everyone, from whatever background, that it was concerned with all their aspirations and hopes.

He told John Humphrys, on BBC Television's *On the Record*: "Labour seems to be, and calls itself, a working-class party. I had a discussion with you about whether I live a middle-class style or working class. It seems as if Labour wanted, in industry, to represent those people up to the kind of foreman class, then, after that, we were noth-

ing to do with them." Mr Prescott said it was pity that Labour had only won half of the votes of the working class in the last election. "It would be very nice if we got the 100 per cent."

However, he added: "Labour has to be about the aspirations of people, to be concerned about their future. We have to seek to represent the many, not the few."

In the same way, Labour had to reach out to the business community – going beyond its traditional role as being the party of the trades unions.

Reflecting a line that will be

pounded hard during the week, Mr Prescott said: "In my life as a trade union official, I used to negotiate with employers constantly and I had an interest in the prosperity of the companies that I was involved in."

"But we've tended to give the impression that we are the Labour Party, but not the business party."

"What we've got to do is perhaps reach out a bit more and say we're as interested in partnership with trade unions and, indeed, business for the creation of wealth."

**Labour candidates opt for loosening union ties**

**CHRIS BLACKHURST**

The overwhelming majority of candidates chosen by Labour to fight its key seats in the next general election and who took part in a survey by *The Independent*, believe the party's links with trade unions should be loosened still further.

Ninety per cent of those asked if the unions' block vote at the annual party conference should be reduced replied that it should. Forty-two of Labour's key candidates responded to the telephone poll, representing almost half the 87 constituencies Labour believes it must win.

In what must be music to the Labour leadership's ears, after the recent furore over reported suggestions from a front-bencher at the TUC in Blackpool that the union links were to be cut, 38 said the union vote should be curbed, three said "no" and one said, "possibly".

Showing a remarkable degree of unanimity over something that is not party policy and is highly-controversial, most said they wanted the process of greater democratisation, started under John Smith and accelerated under Tony Blair, to continue. Ashok Kumar, standing for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland, said the union votes "ought to be gradually reduced further".

Sandra Osborne, the would-be MP for Ayr, said the emphasis now was on "individual participation". Several echoed her view, pointing to the ongoing increase in individual membership as the reason for the erosion of union power. Chris Ruane, the prospective



Under cover: Tony Blair, the Labour leader, sheltering from stormy weather in Blackpool yesterday

Photograph: Andrew Buaman

member for Vale of Clwyd, maintained: "The biggest impetus will come from new membership. The link will be reviewed but we should acknowledge our trade union background. We need consultation not confrontation."

That stress on the need for dialogue and the underlying worry over the sensitivity of severing age-old roots was apparent in several answers. Most, though, were agreed: as far as the scrapping of the block vote is concerned, it is not a question of if but when. David Taylor, trying to win North-West Leicestershire, said: "The trend towards one member one vote is unstoppable and I support this." Elizabeth Blackman, standing in Erewash, said: "Inevitably there will be change in that direction. I do not think it will be stopped."

Perhaps anticipating storms ahead, several turned the tables on the unions, arguing they have been at the forefront of the push for change. Sylvia Heal, hoping to represent Halesowen and Rowley Regis, said: "Many of the trade unions were ahead of the party in encouraging members to vote individually.

That is a good thing which will continue." Gisela Stuart, from Edgbaston, justified the further diminishing of the union hold: "There have been various changes with the trade unions and they are changing."

On another area, bound to pose problems for a future Labour administration – the continued provision of the universal state pension – 83 per cent said it should remain but many went out of their way to add the system needed reviewing. Betty Williams, chosen for Conwy, said: "You can't promise what you can't deliver."

We might have a few shocks once we're in." Fourteen per cent of respondents were less committed, saying the pension should not automatically be continued.

The adherence of the Labour leader to socialism has been an issue in the last few weeks. The party's key candidates who were surveyed, virtually all sang the same tune. Asked if they were socialists, 92 per cent said they were. Many said they were "democratic socialists" while others said they adhered to the socialism as enshrined in the new clause 4. Two passed on the

question and one avoided a direct answer, saying he was a member of the Labour Party who believed in social justice and equality of opportunity.

Predicting the top rate of tax under a future Labour government saw them run for cover. Ninety-five per cent said they were unable to suggest a top rate should be. It was an issue that would be decided when Labour gets into power and depended on the economic circumstances at that time.

■ Research by Sam Coates, Andrew Osborn and Ben Summers

## Old tactics save the party's slick new image

**COLIN BROWN**  
and **BARRIE CLEMENT**

The New Labour leadership last night used old Labour tactics to ensure that Tony Blair avoids defeat and presents a united front to voters this week. Mr Blair will use high tech and videos, including personal endorsements from supporters in a move borrowed from the Democrats, but old-style deals avoided embarrassment over pensions, employment rights and child benefit.

Labour leaders spent the weekend thrashing out a compromise with the unions to promise a full review of the pensioners' demands by a commission, with the promise of a voice for the pensioners' group.

The breakthrough came in a late-night call on Saturday by Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, to Lord (Jack) Jones, the 83-year-old former union power broker from the Wilson era. Lord Jones, a leading campaigner for pensioners' rights, accepted the deal.

The compromise failed to win over the fiery Lady Castle, the battling former cabinet minister, who is planning to go ahead with an appeal to the conference to overturn the leadership's stance. However, the leadership was confident that the compromise would hold.

Dennis Skinner, a left-winger who opposed the move on the NEC, complained that the review did not specify the restoration of the link with earnings. The party leadership also worked hard in hotel rooms to drum up union pressure to compel Labour to a restore full

**BARRIE CLEMENT**  
Labour Editor

The leader of Labour's most loyal affiliate yesterday warned Tony Blair against breaking the link between the party and unions and urged him to dismiss the shadow minister responsible for floating the idea.

On the eve of the last party conference before the general election, Ken Jackson, the increasingly outspoken rightwing General Secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, told the Labour leadership: "It is not the unions that ought to be dropped by Labour. What needs to be dropped are careless words and careless shadow ministers."

Stephen Byers, a Labour employment spokesman, is alleged to have suggested that the party and unions go their separate ways at dinner with journalists during the TUC Congress earlier this month.

Mr Jackson's comments were echoed from the left by Lew Adams, leader of Aslef, the train drivers' union.

"We are not going away, whether or not our rebellious offspring in the political wing of the movement try to disown their parenthood," he said.

Writing in the latest issue of his union's *Locomotive Journal*, he reminded Mr Blair that many of the workers who were recently on strike at London Underground would be out canvassing for Labour. Mr Jackson also accused the Labour leader of allowing "idle speculation" about whether Labour was serious about restoring employment rights.

The party leadership will be fielding John Prescott, the deputy leader, for a morale-boosting rally on Wednesday before the difficult votes on pensions. The votes on rights at work will come today in a debate on the stakeholder economy.

## significant shorts

### Four terrorist suspects to face trial

Four men charged with terrorist offences will appear in court today, following police raids last week accused of conspiring to cause an explosion likely to endanger life or cause serious damage to property, and with possession of explosives.

Scout Yard named the men as Brian McHugh, 30, unemployed; Patrick Pearce, Joseph Kelly, also 30 and unemployed; James Murphy, 25, a school groundsman; and Michael Phillips, 21, a British Airways apprentice engineer.

The charges came on Sat-

urday, the day after the fifth man held by police, Shane O'Neill, 23 – the brother of suspected terrorist Diarmaid O'Neill, who was shot dead in last Monday's police operation – was freed on police bail. Three of the four men were detained at addresses in Hammersmith and Fulham, west London. Michael Phillips was arrested in a raid on a house in Crawley, West Sussex. The men will appear at the high-security Belmarsh magistrates' court, in south-east London.

The victims, aged 18 and 25, were in a Mazda MX5 car which sped down a dead-end road and crashed into a wall in Maidenhead, Berkshire. A police spokeswoman said: "The car completely demolished a lamp-post before hitting the wall so they must have been going at some speed."

Accident investigators were examining the scene and the wreckage.

The two men have not yet been formally identified, and police have not ruled out the possibility that the car had been stolen.

### Rain brings road chaos

Heavy rain and high winds brought flooding which caused chaos in some parts of the country yesterday.

The worst affected areas after as much as three inches of rain on Saturday night were the North West, Wales, and Cumbria, where some roads were under four feet of water and blocked by abandoned cars. Most were later reopened. England and Wales could expect further outbreaks of rain and wind, but the situation was expected to improve gradually across the country, said a London Weather Centre spokesman.

### Geese make record time from Russia

White-fronted geese are making record early arrivals at their major British wintering site, conservationists say.

But officials at the site, the national headquarters of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Slimbridge, on the Severn Estuary in Gloucestershire, are playing down the idea that the visitors are an indicator of a harsh winter ahead. The birds' early arrival is traditionally – but wrongly – seen as a harbinger of severe weather conditions.

A spokeswoman said: "The birds have just had the advantage of strong winds, which have assisted their 2,500-mile migration from the breeding grounds of Northern Russia." The first birds arrived on 22 September; they would not usually be expected until the second week in October, she said.

It was 23 years ago that there was any earlier record ed arrival.

### Four share Lottery win

Four ticket-holders share the National Lottery jackpot of £10.6m, the organisers of the game, Camelot, announced.

According to preliminary estimates, each of the four ticket-holders will receive £2,657,056. The winning numbers were 19, 26, 23, 39, 36, 31. The bonus ball was 3.

The estimated contribution to good causes this week is £2.5m.

### THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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In a quiet Berkshire village, stable lads fall victim to urban heroin dealers. Jojo Moyes reports

# Racing's heartland tries to rein in the drug pushers



Unhappy valley: Lambourn, near Newbury, where police have launched Operation Robin in response to record crime levels associated with heroin abuse. Photograph: Nicholas Turpin

The racing village of Lambourn, in Berkshire, has become the unlikely setting for large-scale police raids, following indications that inner-city drugs dealers are targeting the racing community.

The series of raids, code-named Operation Robin, are in response to a growing heroin problem which has led to a registered 51 addicts in the 4,000 strong village, as well as record levels of associated crime.

"We've had two large-scale raids involving over 40 police... We've put extra police patrols out at night to combat the increase [in associated crime] and it has to some degree stemmed the flow. We will stamp it out," said a police spokesman.

Police will meet racing trainers and parish councillors early in October to discuss the problem, which was highlighted last Thursday when an apprentice jockey, Robert Wainwright, 23, was found guilty at Reading Crown Court of possessing heroin.

Further charges of supplying heroin, which he admitted, were adjourned until 25 October for pre-sentence reports to be prepared. Wainwright, a jockey with the Lambourn-based trainer Mick Channon, was found not guilty of a further charge of

smoking the drug opium. According to police, the sudden upsurge in hard drug use in the sleepy Berkshire village has been caused by dealers moving in to target the large population of young people employed by the industry.

"We've noticed a number of people moved down from places like Liverpool and Manchester where the problem is apparent all the time. They've introduced the problem into our area," said a police spokesman.

He said that the nearby town of Hungerford was experiencing "nothing like the same problem", fuelling police concerns that dealers are attracted to the racing community because of the high proportion of young stable lads with a weekly wage to burn.

"I wouldn't connect it solely with racing but it's a young people's problem, and there are a lot of young people mixing in pubs in Lambourn. It's a very cosmopolitan population... you've got Irish lads, Scottish lads, Liverpudlian lads." He added that despite the success of recent raids, intelligence services had said there was still a problem in the village.

"We can base that on a previous operation regarding ecstasy, which was rife around 18 months ago. We had eight drugs

raids in one go. We took out a main dealer of ecstasy and a couple of local dealers," he said. The problem then subsided, until police became aware that there was a "significant problem" with heroin use among the 17-25 age group.

He said the racing industry took the problem "very seriously" and that police had worked in conjunction with the Jockey Club to address it. Trainers and community leaders are

privately said to be watching carefully for signs of drug abuse among stable lads, but are publicly keen to play down suggestions that there might be a problem. Peter Penfold, a Lambourn parish councillor, said that while there was a "core" of young people that used drugs in Lambourn, "we are advised by police that it is no more a problem than any other area". But suggestions of drug use in racing are not new – and are

not confined to horse-doping. A spokesman for Newmarket police said last week that there had "always been a bit of a problem" and said there was a "suggestion" that there was "a preponderance of drugs in the racing fraternity". One racing source said last week that there were "always stable lads who you knew you could get drugs off if you wanted to".

He said drug use among lads – traditionally amphetamine

based – occurred mainly because of the long, hard hours involved. "It's pretty exhausting work. In some yards you start at 5am, work till midday, try and get some sleep until 4 then do evening stables."

"At the end of the week they've got cash and it's just a relief from what is a fairly miserable existence. [Lads] all blow their money on drink and drugs on Fridays and most of them are penniless by Monday," he said.

"They're the perfect people to aim at."

He believed that the problem was largely confined to the lower echelons of racing as "very few of the jockeys do it since drug testing [was introduced]."

Random testing of jockeys began in 1994, after advice from police in the Newmarket and Lambourn areas suggested that there might be a drug problem. This followed the arrest in 1993 of the leading jockey Frankie Dettori, who was officially cautioned after being found in possession of a quantity of cocaine.

Shortly afterwards, Billy Ellison, the stable lad who looked after the Grand National winner Red Rum, claimed he ran a drugs ring at Newmarket, selling amphetamines to a string of well-known riders. According to Ellison, jockeys took the drug because it suppressed appetite, helping them to keep their weight down, while giving them excess energy.

Weight and stamina are the key issues in racing: a more recent survey of 500 jockeys showed that more than 70 per cent had attempted to lose more than 5 lb in 24 hours and that many resorted to drugs, diuretics and slimming pills.

Following the introduction of testing in Britain, two other ap-



On the gallops at Lambourn: The physical demands of racing make apprentice jockeys easy targets for hard-drug dealers

prentice jockeys, Darren Salter and Sean McCarthy, have been the subject of temporary bans following failed drugs tests and, according to the source, there have been "a lot of changed personalities in the weighing-room".

In February, still insisting that drugs were less of a problem than in society at large, the Jockey Club launched a programme for jockeys on drug awareness and a booklet produced by the charity Lifeline was sent to all apprentice and conditional jockeys.

Police in Lambourn are confident that they are attacking the root of the latest problem. But according to the racing source, as long as weight and stamina are the key issues in racing then drug abuse will continue. He added: "It's always been there – if it's increasing it's just reflecting the rest of society really."

Weight and stamina are the key issues in racing: a more recent survey of 500 jockeys showed that more than 70 per cent had attempted to lose more than 5 lb in 24 hours and that many resorted to drugs, diuretics and slimming pills.

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prentice jockeys, Darren Salter and Sean McCarthy, have been the subject of temporary bans following failed drugs tests and, according to the source, there have been "a lot of changed personalities in the weighing-room".

In February, still insisting that drugs were less of a problem than in society at large, the Jockey Club launched a programme for jockeys on drug awareness and a booklet produced by the charity Lifeline was sent to all apprentice and conditional jockeys.

Police in Lambourn are confident that they are attacking the root of the latest problem. But according to the racing source, as long as weight and stamina are the key issues in racing then drug abuse will continue. He added: "It's always been there – if it's increasing it's just reflecting the rest of society really."

Weight and stamina are the key issues in racing: a more recent survey of 500 jockeys showed that more than 70 per cent had attempted to lose more than 5 lb in 24 hours and that many resorted to drugs, diuretics and slimming pills.

Following the introduction of testing in Britain, two other ap-

## Imagine trying to buy back your childhood

STEVE BOGGAN

In 1964, as the Beatles were beginning to take the world by storm, but before they had become blessed by wealth, John Lennon sang the words: "Can't buy me love."

Three decades later, the son he walked out on as a five-year-old seems to be doing just that.

In the absence of the childhood he would have had if his father had not abandoned his mother, Cynthia, Julian Lennon appears to be buying one.

He was unmasked yesterday as the secret bidder who landed a series of lots at a London auction of Beatles memorabilia two weeks ago. And the items he bought were particularly poignant.

First, and perhaps most moving, were the scribbled notes for the song "Hey Jude", written by Paul McCartney for Julian at the time of his parents' break-up and originally entitled, "Hey Jules". Julian, 33, paid £25,000 for the notes as part of a £55,000 haul of vicious memories.

Among them were a series of postcards from around the world, originally addressed to Julian but lost over the intervening years. Julian's manager, John Cousins, has said that Lennon junior had only a few meetings with his father and just "a few photographs" together with him.

Sad then, that one of the postcards, from Japan, costing £4,140, should end "Lots of love to you + God bless! Daddy, Yoko and Sean."

It has been said that such a sense of exclusion led the young Julian to embark upon his self-destructive period of



Julian Lennon (above) has to compete with Beatles fans to buy postcards originally sent to him by his father (below)



drinking and drug-taking in the 1980s – a binge from which he has emerged remarkably intact.

For years, he was also excluded from his father's vast wealth, given just £50,000 and a \$100-a-week income.

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On 7 October we will be celebrating a decade of innovation – 10 years during which the *Independent* has changed the shape of quality journalism. We are marking our birthday with a week full of surprising improvements and inspirations. Make it a date.

## Geldof becomes fathers' champion

Plans by Bob Geldof to campaign on behalf of divorced fathers' rights to their children received backing from family groups today.

The Live Aid hero said he hoped to make the issue his next big project, following his acrimonious divorce and the continuing dispute with his ex-wife, Paula Yates, over custody of their children.

The move was welcomed by the pressure group Families Need Fathers, which said the star was just one of many men now getting involved in the cause. Campaigners believe the law is loaded in favour of the wife in custody battles.

Geldof outlined his plans in an interview before he launched a custody battle for his three daughters. He fears that Yates could be planning to move the family to Australia to set up home with her boyfriend, INXS singer Michael Hutchence.

And despite the inevitable sadness of his childhood, observers say Julian had made his peace with his father before Lemmo was shot outside his New York apartment in 1980. But even in that there is a kind of sadness.

"As a child, John had been abandoned by his mother, who just left him for an sum to bring up," said Philip Norman, author of *Help! The True Story of the Beatles*. "Then, just as he was getting to know her, she was killed."

"Exactly the same happened with Julian. He and Lennon had not been close for years but they were really getting there when John was murdered."

"I kid you not, this is now my big concern. Nothing else matters."

Peter Anderson, of Families Need Fathers, said he was delighted at Geldof's new crusade.

"The momentum is now rising behind our cause and has been for some time. It was the Child Support Agency that first brought our plight to the attention of the public," he said.

"Before that guys were being pushed out of homes and stopped from seeing their children. Then along came the CSA, who said not only can you not see your kids but you have got to pay for them as well."

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news

# Labour rounds on 'tax gaffe' by Clarke

COLIN BROWN  
and DIANE COYLE

The Tories did mislead voters at the last election over promises to cut taxes, Kenneth Clarke admitted yesterday. He was immediately accused by Labour of making another gaffe.

The public would "look sideways" at any pre-election tax cuts in his November Budget, the Chancellor said, remark that will fuel demands on the Tory right for him to go.

Speaking in Washington last night, Mr Clarke insisted that the Government was only just able to resume its tax-cutting agenda as the economy recovered and he gave his strongest indication yet that he will not deliver the giveaway Budget that some members of his party would like to see.

"The public will need to see that any tax cuts are credible, can be afforded, are good for the economy and are going to last," he said.

Mr Clarke is facing the threat of a Euro-sceptic backlash over his earlier remarks on Europe, which he refused to recant earlier in the day on GMTV. He said: "It is not the case that my budget requires tax cuts in order to win the election.

"The public will be deeply suspicious of any tax cuts because they remember we promised tax cuts last time and unfortunately we weren't able to deliver them."

"They'll look twice, sideways at tax cuts from this government and they'll accept tax cuts only if they can see it fits in with a sensible strategy that's going to make them and their families better off for some years to come."

Labour's campaign spokesman, Brian Wilson, said: "This is an extraordinary admission by the Chancellor. He will certainly be taken at his word by the electorate. After five

years of increasing taxes, the Tories will indeed attract deep suspicion and massive scepticism if Mr Clarke stands up on Budget day to announce tax cuts which would take effect a few weeks before the election."

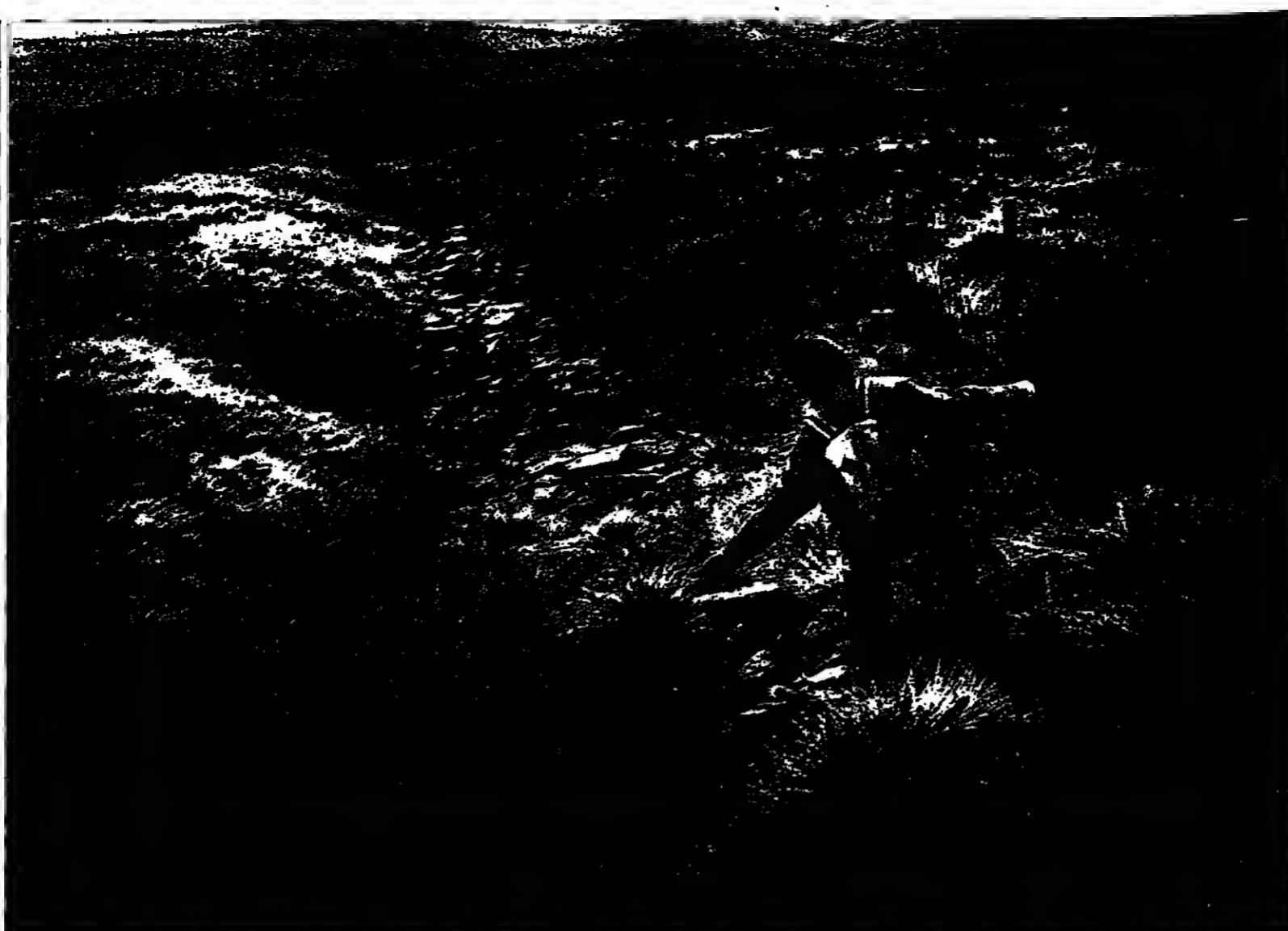
The Chancellor also confirmed he is at odds with the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, who wants to increase interest rates. Mr Clarke said: "We're only quarter of a per cent apart at the moment. Contrast that with the old days, I can remember chancellors bunging up interest rates 2 per cent at a time. And I make small adjustments, one way or the other, to keep the economy on course."

On Europe, Mr Clarke clashed with John Redwood, the right-wing former cabinet minister, by rejecting calls by Tory Eurosceptics to block European progress towards economic and monetary union.

"It's completely ridiculous to suggest that Britain can stop them doing that. Britain is in the unique position where eventually our government will have the choice as to whether or not we're going to participate, but the idea that British policy can realistically be set to stop the others going ahead is complete nonsense. There is no reason to do so."

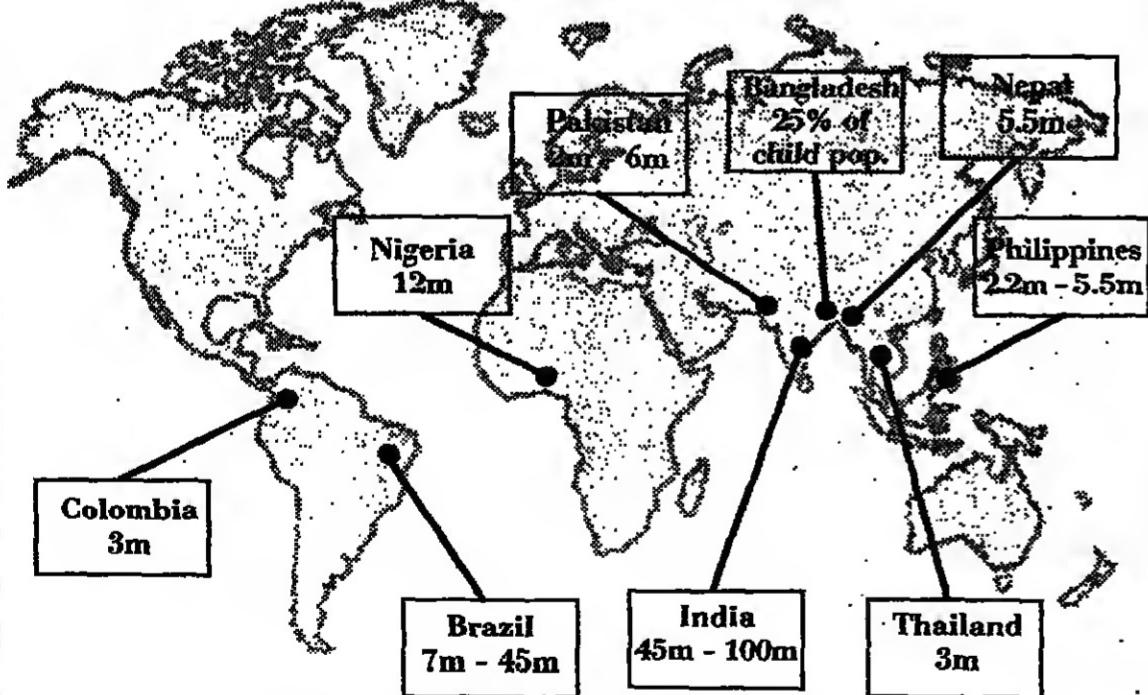
In Washington, Mr Clarke refused to be drawn on whether he would consider resigning if cabinet Eurosceptics swung Government policy against EMU. "As the Government continues to reaffirm its complete commitment to a policy I have been advocating, I don't think the question remotely arises," he said.

Lord Younger, former Cabinet minister and head of the Royal Bank of Scotland, backed the Chancellor in keeping open the option of going into a single European currency.



Access demand: One of the ramblers who protested on private moors near Haworth, West Yorkshire, yesterday. Photograph: John Angerson/Guzelian

## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST CHILD AND BONDED LABOUR HISTORIC LONDON CONFERENCE



FIGURES IN MILLIONS FOR CHILD AND BONDED LABOUR AROUND THE WORLD  
Sources ILO & UNICEF

"Child Labour is a melancholy reality around the world but it casts its longest shadow on the poor countries of the south."

Third World Governments must do their part.

But only a more just world order with financial and political support to poorer countries can truly defeat the twin enemies of child and bonded labour."

*Benazir Bhutto: Prime Minister of Pakistan*

For copies of the London Declaration on child and bonded labour and more information on how you can help the campaign contact ICACABL at 128a Tooley Street, London SE1 2TU.

Ramblers take case to Brontë moorland

ESTHER LEACH

They stood in torrential rain overlooking the wild moorland they are forbidden to walk. It was not the first protest and unlikely to be the last by ramblers who want to roam privately owned swathes of Pennine fells.

A group gathered yesterday on the slopes of the Brontë Moors, outside Haworth, West Yorkshire, to make their protest before joining hundreds of walkers at a rally in the town.

The crowds spilled out of the community centre and stood in the rain listening to speakers including the Ramblers Association president, Janet Street-Porter, call for a new Trans-Pennine Coalition of walkers to campaign for access to the hills.

"Here in the Pennines our members have been struggling for over 30 years to win that freedom, but their voices have often gone unheard," Miss Street-Porter said.

She renewed an appeal to landowners to use the association's free Landowners Access Line to make offers to open up their banned moorland. But the telephone line, which opened a fortnight ago, has yet to receive a single call.

## Army divided over right to escort Stone of Scone

The Army will escort the ancient Stone of Scone back to Scotland on St Andrew's Day - 700 years after it was seized by the invading English.

Ms Glennie said: "Music often seems to be the soft target for the hatchet man looking to cut school budgets... New research overseas has shown that learning music can help children improve in other areas such as reading - so it's a shame so many of our youngsters are losing out."

Phil Collins added: "Most kids want to learn to play musical instruments - but it seems the demand often exceeds the availability of instruments in schools."

land, has yet to decide between Edinburgh Castle and Scone Palace, in Perthshire, the stone's historic resting place.

The stone is the most ancient and potent symbol of the Scottish kings and the subject of countless campaigns by those demanding its return. It was originally used as a coronation throne by the Irish Kings of Tara and taken to Scotland when the Irish invaded the land of the Picts in the ninth century.

John Major announced in July that the stone should be handed back to Scotland on the 700th anniversary of its removal by King Edward I - the "Hammer of the Scots". It has been in Westminster Abbey for the past 700 years and been used in the coronation of some 30 British monarchs.

Now, according to Army sources, a strong contender for the operation are the bearskin-wearing Scots Guards, whose

Regimental Day is coincidentally 30 November - St Andrew's Day. The regiment recruits from across Scotland, although its regimental headquarters is in London.

There is view in some parts of the Army that the stone

should be escorted by an English regiment to the border,

where it could be handed over

to a Scottish unit. Yet, there is

a growing body of support for

The Royal Scots whose regi-

mental headquarters is in Edin-

burgh Castle.



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# news

## Sacrificial site at risk from Eton boating

Unique prehistoric bridges are to disappear under a man-made lake for rowers, writes David Keys

One of the most important archaeological discoveries in Britain is being destroyed in preparation for gravel extraction. Archaeologists excavating the old course of the River Thames near Dorney, Buckinghamshire, 25 miles west of London, have discovered a huge 3,300-year-old religious complex. The site, on land owned by Eton College, is of international importance and includes the remains of the world's oldest-known bridge. It has no known parallel anywhere in the world.

The team, from the Oxford archaeological unit, have discovered six bridge-like structures which originally spanned the river and appear to have been used for the ritual disposal of corpses.

The remains of about five people have been found in the 10 per cent of the site which the team has been able to excavate. Most of the ancient timbers and any unexcavated bodies are being obliterated in preparation for £33m worth of gravel extraction work. Eton College has made the area available to mineral contractors. In 10 years' time the gravel pit can be used as a rowing lake for Eton pupils.

The evidence suggests that the bodies were either of high status individuals or of human sacrificial victims. The structures were used successively over a period of almost a thousand years, from 1350BC to 400BC, and if they had been used for ordinary funerals many more bones would have been found.

The six prehistoric ritual bridges at Eton range from 18 to 39 metres in length - because of variations in the width of the river in prehistoric times. So far 150 metres of bridge have been found and 150 metres of the timber uprights have been located.

Sheep and cattle remains - almost certainly from animal sacrifices - were also thrown from the bridges and large numbers of their bones have been recovered.

The director of the excavation, Tim Allen, believes that the oldest of the six Eton "body bridges" was built in the Middle Bronze Age in around 1350BC, with three others dating from 1200 to 900BC, and two others from 700-500BC. The youngest, dating from the Middle Iron Age, was built in around 400BC. A seventh structure, dating from the Late Bronze Age, may have been a bridge or jetty.

## Schools 'cull A-level hopefuls to keep league table position'

Schools are putting a stop to increasing the numbers of sixth formers taking A-levels because of pressure on the schools to do well in league tables, private tutorial colleges say.

The colleges say that the number of pupils joining them halfway through their two-year A-level courses has risen sharply since the introduction of league tables four years ago.

Many of the pupils are from independent schools but some state schools are also pressuring candidates to withdraw from A-level subjects in the middle of their courses. Schools deny that pupils are being forced out because of league tables but Elizabeth Rickards, principal of Davies Laming and Dick, a London tutorial college, said: "The number of students coming into our upper sixth has risen from zero to 20."

"This is market forces gone mad. Some schools are being absolutely ruthless... It costs £8,190 to do three A-levels here. What worries me is what happens to the pupils who cannot afford to come here."

Last week, Ms Rickards saw



Bone to pick: Parts of a skeleton which could have belonged to a human sacrificial victim discovered near Dorney, Buckinghamshire

Photograph: John Lawrence

The bridges connect the north bank of the northern channel of the old prehistoric Thames to what was then a half-mile long island located between the northern and still surviving southern channel of the river. The former island - now bounded on its southern side by the modern Thames - could be a vital clue to understanding the "body bridges" and why they were constructed in this stretch of river. According to prehistoric British tradition, islands were sacred places,

often identified with the "other world", the domain of the dead and of the gods.

On a former sandbank ar-

chaeologists have found the remains of a Late Bronze Age skeleton, wooden stakes, and two empty pots, while nearby in former shallow water they unearthed a skull and a mortised plank of wood. It is possible the human remains were from sacrifices.

"This discovery is of international importance," said John Barrett, reader in archaeology at Sheffield University. "As a complex the site is unique".

Because of time and financial constraints, 90 per cent of the archaeologically important human bone-bearing deposits have not been excavated.

In planning its "archaeological campaign" Eton College says it took "the best possible advice" and appointed an advisory board of eminent academics including some from the British Museum and the British Archaeology Council.

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news

**cleaner way with rubbish:** 'Eco' levy on landfill sites that starts tomorrow will spark many recycling schemes, but at a price

# Tax on dumps promises jobs for thousands

**CHOLAS SCHOON**  
Environment Correspondent

tomorrow sees the dawn of a voluntary "eco" tax which will make polluting more expensive and create jobs. Yet, like any new tax, its introduction is surrounded by much moaning.

The pessimistic view of the government's landfill tax - a levy of each ton of rubbish taken to dump - is that it will lead to a rise of fly-tipping on roadsides, or parks and open spaces.

Furthermore, council-tax bills will rise or local government services be cut because the tax will be passed on to councils, which are among the biggest dumpers of all. In Ireland, rubbish will start to flow to Ulster to the Republic, where the tax does not apply.

But the optimists see the tax as a significant step towards an ecologically sustainable society. It will cause hundreds of new, labour-intensive recycling schemes to blossom, creating thousands of jobs. Some further jobs, though perhaps not many, will come from a small cut in National Insurance employer contributions which the tax is being used to fund.

This is the first application of a new taxation principle announced by the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, in his 1994 Budget. John Gummer, Secretary of State for the Environment, persuaded him to move towards more taxation of activities which do environmental harm (many of which are completely untaxed) and to reduce taxes on labour and employment correspondingly.

Landfill sites are environmentally destructive because rotting refuse produces methane, a global-warming gas, and a noxious liquid called leachate. If it leaks out - which should not happen in modern, sealed landfill sites - it can pollute aquifers and surface streams.

From tomorrow each tonne

of waste will be taxed £7, which drops to £2 a tonne for inert, non-rottable waste such as demolition rubble and ash. The tax will fall on the operators of landfill tips, who currently charge £5-£25 for each tonne of refuse received. The operators will pass the tax on to their customers.

It will bring in about £500m a year, and Mr Clarke has already pledged to use this to fund a 0.2 per cent cut in National Insurance employee contributions, taking them down to 10 per cent. HM Customs and Excise, which will collect the tax, estimates it will apply to around



His baby: John Gummer had pressed for a new approach

new tax. Landfill site operators will be able to claim back 90 per cent of each pound of tax they pay in return for each pound they spend on approved "green schemes".

Those schemes will cover research and development into recycling and waste reduction, public education and the beautifying and greening of land blighted by disposal operations.

They will have to be run by specially created, non-profit-making partnerships which can include tip operators, councils and environmental charities.

The new organisation will be controlled by a regulatory body which has not yet been set up. It is hoped that within a few years they will be spending tens of millions of pounds per annum, employing thousands of people in a range of schemes, many involving recycling.

The new tax will also promote the building of huge municipal incinerators which use the heat generated to produce electricity. Waste disposed in them is exempted from the landfill tax, so its advent makes them much more competitive with landfill sites.

It remains to be seen whether the tax, set at a modestly low level, will give the millions of households and companies who produce the waste an incentive to produce less. The latest figures show that in the South-East, the most affluent part of Britain, municipal refuse is rising by 3 per cent a year.

Mr Gummer hopes to persuade the Government to adopt other kinds of environmental tax linked to rebates for setting up trusts that run environmental improvement projects. "The trust concept seems to be the route down which we should go," he told *The Independent*.

But he has scrapped plans for an eco-tax on the quarrying industry, which lobbied successfully against it.



Glass mountain: Part of a store of thousands of bottles piled up to be recycled at Richmond-on-Thames council's depot in Twickenham, south-west London

Model borough faces bill for £700,000

**NICHOLAS SCHOON**

The London borough of Richmond-upon-Thames, with its recycling rate second to none, has mixed feelings about the new landfill tax.

Because almost a quarter of the waste its households generate is re-used and recycled instead of being dumped, the tax will bear less heavily on it than on councils which recycle less. But it will still bear down heavily. The council's waste supremo, David Streeter, said the tax would cost Richmond £700,000 in the next financial year. That is equivalent to about £10 on the council tax for the average household if it was passed straight through.

"The Government has provided no compensation for the introduction of the new tax in its grants to councils," he said. "So it means further pressure on us to cut expenditure and services."

Yet the Liberal Democrat-controlled council supports the tax principle, and believes its recycling rate can be doubled to 50 per cent fairly soon.

The Government's target is for 25 per cent of municipal refuse to be recycled or put to some other positive use by the year 2000, but Richmond hopes to achieve that this year.

It collects waste paper weekly from the doorsteps of the great majority of Richmond homes. And it has 108 local recycling banks, including street corner "microbanks". None of them are more than half a mile from any house in the borough.

It is now, says chief contract services officer Mr Streeter, a matter of necessity. "If we don't reduce, reuse and recycle waste much more, then London is going to face a critical situation in seven to ten years," he warns.

He gives the reason as a lack of landfill space in southern England.

Richmond's waste is taken by train to landfill sites in the depths of Oxfordshire.

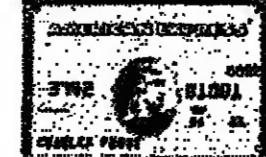
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# Charity to keep baldness at bay for cancer patients

**LIZ HUNT**  
Health Editor

A new charity, which aims to help cancer sufferers across the country avoid or limit one of the most distressing side-effects of their treatment, is to be launched on Wednesday.

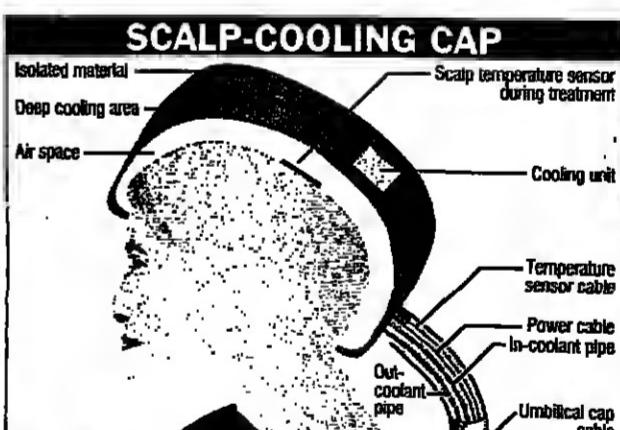
Caroline Woolfson, a land and property negotiator in her early fifties, has, with two friends, created the charity Headlines to help patients deal with the hair loss brought about by chemotherapy.

Headlines will be raising funds for NHS hospitals to install a device known as Scalp Cooling System II (SCSII), which has been developed in Israel and which can dramatically reduce chemotherapy-related hair loss in some - though not all - patients. Each SCSII costs about £20,000.

Mrs Woolfson's own hair has only recently started to grow



Campaigner: Caroline Woolfson, and the SCSII which can relieve therapy-induced alopecia



back following intensive chemotherapy for ovarian cancer.

Hair loss has been one of the hardest things to cope with, she said, as for three years she struggled to maintain a normal family and working life while fighting a potentially fatal disease.

"It sounds strange but the cancer diagnosis did not touch me," she said. "When they told me I would lose all my hair, well, that really got me. I asked if there was anything they could do to stop it and they said no."

The powerful drugs used to treat cancer affect healthy cells as well as cancerous ones by interfering with cell division.

Rapidly dividing cells, such as the hair follicles, are hardest hit.

Scientists have known for about 20 years that if they drastically cool the scalp during chemotherapy, damage to the hair follicle can be reduced - and hair loss limited or avoided.

A lower temperature constricts blood vessels, reducing exposure of the hair root to the cancer drug. It also slows metabolic activity so the cells divide less rapidly and are less vulnerable.

The idea for Headlines developed after Mrs Woolfson read about the singer Olivia Newton-John, and how she managed to avoid alopecia, or hair loss, during her treatment for breast cancer. She wore what was known as a "cold cap" during her chemotherapy treatments, in which dry ice or cryogen gel is placed in a cap and applied to the patient's head.

After making some inquiries, Mrs Woolfson discovered that the Christie Hospital in Manchester, where she was being treated, did have a cold cap, although it was rarely mentioned to patients. For her second block of chemotherapy, which began in January, she decided to try it and she found that her hair

## DAILY POEM

### Tax Relief

By Benjamin Zephaniah

*Keep holding on it's cummin  
Hang on  
It's cummin soon,  
Keep holding on it's cummin  
Tax today  
Jam tomorrow.*

*Now just hold on it's cummin  
Soon cum  
De day is soon.  
Keep hold on it cummin  
Tax today  
Jam tomorrow.*

*Tomorrow will be cummin  
Invest in jam today  
Keep holding on it's cummin,  
Jam tomorrow  
Jam tomorrow  
Jam tomorrow  
Tax today.*

Benjamin Zephaniah was born in Birmingham in 1958 and grew up in Handsworth and Jamaica. He is poet, actor, playwright and singer, nominated in 1989 to be Professor of Poetry at Oxford, but known to millions in this country and worldwide from his prolific readings and performances. Rapturous, earthy, irreverent, Zephaniah has created his own version of Jamaican "dub" poetry. His new collection *Propa Propaganda* is published by Bloodaxe Books at £6.95.

loss was reduced and she did not have to resort to a wig as she had after the first treatments. But the cap was uncomfortable, very heavy and tight-fitting, and the ice had to be replaced every 45 minutes as it melted.

Then Mrs Woolfson read about the Israeli invention which operates on the same principle as a scalp-cooling cap but which achieves thermostatically-controlled temperatures. The patient does not experience any cooling sensation.

"We made some inquiries and we hope to have the first machine delivered to the Christie very soon," Mrs Woolfson said yesterday. "But we won't stop there ... every cancer patient who needs or wants it should have access to one."

"In America they take this very seriously but it isn't British to worry about the cosmetic side of things and many oncologists are dismissive."

"Of course the life-saving drugs are more important for the health service to pay for, but Headlines is about promoting awareness of hair loss and what can be done about it. Patients who feel better about themselves will do better."

Barbara Kanas, a member of the charity's committee, said: "Our aim is to have at least one [SCSII] in every major city. There are many dreadful illnesses, but hair loss ... can have such an appalling psychological effect."

The Caroline Woolfson Christie Appeal can be contacted on 0161 448 7228.

Crash  
Trade threat genetic altered

# Crash jet 'was testing stealth technology'

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY  
Defence Correspondent

The Tornado F3 fighter which crashed just yards from Blackpool's South Pier at the weekend may have been involved in top secret testing of stealth technology for the next generation of RAF planes.

The two crewmen were yesterday recovering amid growing concern about the Tornado safety record.

The plane plunged into shallow water at low tide at about 3.45pm on Saturday. British Aerospace refused to give the names of the pilot and naviga-

tur, who ejected moments before the crash, or to allow them to give interviews. The navigator had facial injuries and was released from hospital yesterday, while the pilot suffered minor back injuries, the usual injuries associated with ejecting from a jet.

The Ministry of Defence and BAe, which was carrying out what was described as "some form of servicing" or "routine testing", said the details of the crash and the circumstances in which it took place could not be disclosed until the MoD's findings were published.

However, *The Independent*

understands the aircraft was at the end of its sortie and returning from the south-west to BAe's airfield at Warton, Lancashire, but turned out to sea shortly before crashing. Last night large parts of the wreckage had been removed to Warton.

BAe and the MoD yesterday refused to say what the aircraft was doing or why, unusually, it was flying on a Saturday.

Earlier this year there was a proposal to phase out the F3s and replace them with F16 fighters leased from the United States until the new Eurofighter enters service in 2001.



Unhappy landings: 22 Tornados have crashed since 1990

But this plan was rejected in favour of upgrading the F3s with Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (Amraam) and a target information system called JTIDS. It is possible the aircraft was being tested after these modifications.

However, BAe are also engaged in classified studies into

the replacement for the GR1 Tornado bomber. This includes studies called Hale - High Agility, Low Observation - in other words, stealth technology, and it is known that Tornados are being used to test stealth techniques, including radar-absorbent coatings.

The fact these guys were flying on a Saturday, though not unheard of, is unusual," said Nick Cook, aviation editor of *Jane's Defence Weekly*. "This suggests they might have been doing something a little covert."

In all, 22 Tornados have crashed since 1990, seven of them the F3 fighter variant.

However, the Tornado lost on Saturday was the first to crash in the hands of BAe, which built it as part of a British-German-Italian consortium, for 20 years. The aircraft was originally designed as a bomber, and later adapted to be an air-to-air fighter, with limited success.

The F3 fighter entered service with the RAF in 1984. The GR1 bomber version was used in dare-devil low-level attacks on Iraqi airfields during the 1991 Gulf war. The F3 has a different role, designed to fly high over the North Sea and pick off incoming Russian bombers with its medium range

air-to-air missiles. It is no "agile fighter", and in the war F3s were held back from front line over Iraq.

Although the losses of NATO bombers in the Gulf were criticised, the RAF had higher rate of loss earlier year through training accidents. Two F3 fighters and a GR1 bomber were lost in January year, and another GR1 in February. The jet which crashed Saturday was the 13th British combat aircraft to be lost year. Although senior RAF officers maintain the losses are bad luck, privately RAF pilots admit the aircraft are getting

US lobby insists unmodified beans cannot be processed separately

## Trade war threat over genetically altered soya

CHARLES ARTHUR  
Science Editor

Breads, biscuits, salad dressings and margarines made from genetically modified soybeans will go on sale in British supermarkets later this year without special labelling, despite earlier promises by the companies that such labelling would always be employed.

The supermarkets, including Sainsbury's, Tesco and Safeway, are angry at having been driven into this position - which is the result of the powerful lobby of the American soybean producers, which have refused to separate out the genetically modified beans in this year's crop.

And the move could lead to a low-key trade war between the US and Europe.

A number of scientists have warned that genetically modified foodstuffs could pose unknown risks in those who eat them, because the regulatory structure for these types of foods is less tight than those for genetically modified animals.

"Living systems are so complicated that you can't predict that new genes won't interact with existing ones," said Dr Mac-Wan Ho, of the department of biology at the Open University.

"But the regulators just ask if the foreign gene is present, and whether it produces what the makers say that it does. But they don't check for purity."

Two other scientists have also accused advisers to the Government of "oversimplifying" the case in favour of genetically modified foods. "The process of introducing a gene into an organism is very, very imprecise," said John Fagan, a molecular biologist who in 1994 turned down a \$600,000 grant to develop genetically modified products in the US. "It can produce new allergens or toxins, or reduce the nutritional value of the food altogether."

Michael Antoniou, a British-based researcher into clinical genetics, said: "There's always the possibility that we're not going to pick up on something that is dangerous."

There have been problems with genetically modified foods in the past: in one case, a protein from Brazil nuts was introduced to soybeans to improve their quality as food.

stuff. But people who were allergic to Brazil nuts were allergic to the soybeans.

"We have been forced to accept that we won't be able to label them separately," said a spokeswoman for Sainsbury's - which last February issued a customer leaflet with a genetically engineered tomato product that said: "If Sainsbury's are to sell further products developed with the aid of genetic modification, these will be labelled."

The new foodstuffs will probably come on sale in November, following the harvesting and processing of the beans, which will happen over the next few weeks.

The result is that it could be virtually impossible to feed the family without buying something made with the altered soybeans, which have been engineered by the chemicals group Monsanto to be resistant to a herbicide called Roundup - also made by Monsanto.

The powerful American Soybean Association (ASA) insists that it is not possible to separate out the genetically modified soybeans, which will make up about 2 per cent of the final US crop, comprising hundreds of thousands of tonnes of soybeans.

The beans all go into the same processing plants, it said, so that the genetically modified beans are distributed throughout the final product, such as oils and flours.

The ASA was backed last week by Gene Moos, the US under-secretary of agriculture, who said that separating and labelling the modified beans was unnecessary and would be impossible.

Paul Drazek, who is a senior technical adviser to the US Department of Agriculture, said: "If separate labels are placed on these soybeans, it makes no scientific sense."

A number of German food producers, angry at having the altered beans forced on them, have warned the United States that they may switch to using rape oil rather than soybean oil, or seek out European soybean producers in preference to American ones.

Last week EuroCommerce, a group which represents food retailers and wholesalers in 20 countries, said that American farmers could risk losing their European markets if consumers decide to boycott soy products.

CLARE GARNER

The partner of Rachel Nickell, the woman murdered no Wimborne Minster four years ago, would have committed suicide had it not been for her son, he said yesterday.

"I have come close to losing my mind because the whole thing is close to insanity," André Hanscombe, 33, said. "There are still times when I feel enough is enough, that I should go now. But I don't because of Alex."

The child, then two, was found clinging to his mother's body, covered in her blood and too shocked to speak. He rarely cries over his ordeal, said Mr Hanscombe, who was speaking in advance of the publication of his book, *The Last Thursday in July: The Story of Those Left Behind*.

"His survival instinct is so strong and he copes so well that

you get used to him being almost blasé about everything.

"When he does break down, it is terrifying. You realise that it is them all the time and he is just dealing with it."

"Maybe once a year something will trigger it off. He nearly lost his thumb in a farm gate once and he went to pieces, shouting, 'I'm going to die, I'm going to die.' It was total trauma. All sorts of things came out over that but he was back in control that afternoon."

Alex, the only witness to the murder in July 1992, weeks before his third birthday, describes his mother's killer as "the bad man". He can recall the killer and his clothes, the knife he produced, and how he washed in a stream after his savage attack. But he has never described how his mother was sexually assaulted and stabbed 49 times.

"The moment he focuses on that

it is overwhelming and he blanks it out," Mr Hanscombe told the *Mail on Sunday*.

The murderer remains unsolved. Colin Stagg, a 33-year-old convicted sex offender, was acquitted of her murder when the judge, Mr Justice Ognall,

ruled that the prosecution evidence, obtained by an undercover woman police officer, was inadmissible. Alex has never been shown a photo of Mr Stagg and has never been asked formally to identify him.

Mr Hanscombe, who moved

to France with his son shortly after his murder, said he could not look to the future. "There used to be a point I looked to - 'after the trial'. But now there is nothing in focus on ahead," he said. Neither could he contemplate having another partner. "Rachel made me promise if anything ever happened to that I would find somebody else - not become a hermit, living on memories," he said. "I told her the same thing so I know she is right intellectually, but even the thought of it makes me feel unfaithful. I still have a relationship with Rachel and I don't want to let her down. She has been hurt enough as it is."

Mr Hanscombe began writing his book shortly after Ms Nickell's death. "I wrote it so that my memories would be permanently stored and so that I could find some peace," he explained. "This way I am not going

over things with the same intensity, afraid that things might slip away from me."

The book is also for Alex, so he can read it "when he is ready". But Mr Hanscombe realises that he may not wish to do so. "Perhaps his curiosity to know more about Rachel's death will not be awakened because he knows enough. He already knows what happened. He saw everything."

No light at the end of the tunnel for Middle East peace hopes.  
Page 9



Gilded hall: A painted wooden room from Syria, c1800, which is expected to fetch £60,000-80,000 when auctioned by Sotheby's, in London, on 11 October. The interior, in the Ottoman taste fashionable among Levant merchants in the late-18th century, combines traditional motifs with rococo influences from Western Europe. Photograph: Nik Strangelow

**Memories of a murder:** the lover of Rachel Nickell describes his continuing struggle 'It is all close to insanity. Sometimes I feel I should die now. I don't because of our son'



A couple's promise: Rachel Nickell and André Hanscombe



A couple's promise: Rachel Nickell and André Hanscombe

Pillows, duvets, sheets, blankets.  
Honestly, you're not dreaming.

## international

## significant shorts

Oktoberfest  
ursting at  
the gills

which's Oktoberfest, the last Bavarian feast, died by copious quantities of beer and sausage, is so successful this year that organisers yesterday were urging visitors to stay away. Some 700,000 people flocked into the vast tent bags on the Theresienwiese fairground on Saturday alone, despite the appeals and loudspeaker announcements at a day's big football match telling people not to come. *Reuter — Munich*

UAE extends  
deadline

Pressure eased at embassies and airlines in the United Arab Emirates following a decision to extend a deadline for an estimated 200,000 illegal immigrants to legalise their stay or leave from today until 31 October. *Reuter — Dubai*

NZ regime up  
in opinion poll

New Zealand's conservative National Party government surged five points in an opinion poll. A TV1 poll showed National up five points at 40 per cent while the main opposition Labour Party remained in second place on 18 per cent. New Zealand will hold its first election under proportional representation on 12 October. *Reuter — Wellington*

Bosnia's time  
difference

In Bosnia, riven by ethnic dispute, Muslims, Serbs and Croats cannot agree on what time it is. By government decree, clocks were set back an hour at the weekend in Muslim-controlled parts of Bosnia. The rest of the country stuck with the old time. *Reuter — Sarajevo*

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The Village Cricket Tour will give hours of pleasure. A novel which describes the adventures and mishaps of a team of amateur cricketers who spend two weeks of their summer holidays on a cricket tour of the West Country and which has been compared to Jerome K Jerome's classic "Three Men in a Boat". "I enjoyed it immensely" wrote Peter Tinniswood in Punch. "He has succeeded in writing a book that will entertain, a book that will amuse and warm the cockles of tired hearts." Coleman is a very funny writer," said The England. "It would be a pity if cricketers were the only people to read this book." "Seminal reading includes de Selincourt and Blunden and should now embrace Vernon Coleman's latest offering, a whimsical piece about the peregrinations of a village cricket team on its summer tour," said The Cricketer magazine. "All the characters are here, woven together by a raft of anecdotes and reminiscences and a travelogue of some of the most picturesque spots in the south west." A marvellous present for all cricket lovers.

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Anyone who likes golf will love The Man Who Inherited a Golf Course. This superb novel tells the story of Trevor Dukinfield who wakes up one morning to find that he is the owner of his very own golf club - fairways, bunkers, clubhouse and all. There's one snag: to keep the club he must win a golf match. And he's never played a round of golf in his life. "The scenario is tailor made for Vernon Coleman's light and amusing anecdotes about country life and pursuits" said the Sunday Independent. "Very readable!" said Golf World. "Hugely enjoyable in the best tradition of British comic writing" said the Evening Chronicle. "The mix of anecdotes and moments of sheer farce make for an absorbing read" said the Evening Telegraph. A terrific present for anyone who enjoys golf. Far more fun than another pair of socks or a bottle of aftershave.

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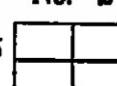
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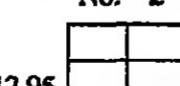
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**"Vernon Coleman writes brilliant books"**  
The Good Book Guide

# Can the White House save Clinton boxed in over summit expectations

RUPERT CORNWELL  
Washington

The Clinton administration last night was under few illusions that the talks here tomorrow to be attended by the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, and Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, can at best do more than secure a truce to halt the violence that threatens to destroy what is left of the Middle East peace process.

Announcing his initiative, which King Hussein of Jordan and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt have also been invited to join, President Clinton said he was prepared to do "everything in my power" to restore calm and a climate in which real negotiations could take place. The fighting and loss of life of the last few days had been "a terrible development" for the Palestinian and Israeli people alike.

But even after Mr Clinton spoke, both the format and duration of the discussions was unclear. Scheduled to start tomorrow, they would last "a day or two", according to the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher. King Hussein will attend, but the presence of President Mubarak - desperately sought by Mr Arafat - was uncertain.

White House officials said Mr Clinton would speak by phone with the Palestinian leader last night, to dispel his concerns.

Expectations, however, are being kept low, not just to protect Mr Clinton from a perceived foreign policy failure just five weeks before the US election, but out of a recognition of just how deep is the crisis ignited by the re-opening of the archaeological tunnel near the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

"This is an emergency," Mr Christopher said yesterday, warning that the situation was more perilous than at any time since the "peace process" began in 1991. Not much should be expected from the Washington meetings: "There are strains, they are pretty raw." At best, his officials say, the meeting will



US ambassador Madeleine Albright in pensive mood at the Security Council

This is an emergency.  
There are strains,  
they are raw'

leadership had used the incident for "religious incitement". The tunnel had nothing to do with the current violence, it was "a complete fabrication ... that doesn't merit serious discussion". Mr Netanyahu promised to come to Washington "without pre-conditions". But he gave not the slightest hint of any concession he was ready to make.

Mr Clinton's announcement was the first diplomatic breakthrough from a grueling and thankless week for US diplomacy. For days the administration had been working to engineer a summit, biting its lip to avoid overt criticism of Mr Netanyahu while privately imploring the Israeli authorities to close the tunnel - but hitherto to no avail. On the first

point at least, things have changed, thanks to a night of phone calls between Mr Christopher and US officials and Mr Netanyahu, Mr Arafat and other participants in the crisis, and the realisation by all concerned that without action, events might spin totally out of control. How closely involved Mr Clinton will be in the talks remains to be seen, nor is it clear whether they will be held bilaterally with the US as honest brokers, or face-to-face between the protagonists.

But rarely has Washington's ability to influence events seemed smaller. The smiles at the two meetings this year between Mr Clinton and Mr Netanyahu have not hidden the gulf between them, in terms of both policy and trust. The US moved heaven and earth to secure the re-election of the defeated Labour leader Shimon Peres in last spring's election; not surprisingly Mr Netanyahu is not over-disposed to listen to the Americans now.

Mr Clinton's leverage will be lessened further by his unwillingness to do anything to upset American Jewish voters so close to the election. A sign of Washington's uncomfortable position was its abstention in Saturday's 14 to zero vote of the UN Security Council, urging both sides to "reverse all acts" that had contributed to the crisis.

At the very least the image of an American President as peace-maker will do Mr Clinton's prospects no harm. He will probably be seen by most Americans as having done his best in what even Mr Netanyahu yesterday acknowledged as one of the "most intractable problems of human history".

Letters, page 13

NETANYAHU

ASESINO



Spell it out: Demonstrators in Madrid display a banner reading 'Netanyahu - assassin' in protest at the violence in Israel and the West Bank

Photograph: Denis Doyle/AP

## French angry about talks absence

Agencies — No sooner was the US initiative on the Middle East announced than it hit criticism from one of America's allies, France.

Paris said a Middle East summit announced by Washington could be useful in the search for peace but regretted that no European leaders had been invited to attend.

"If the situation can pass from crisis to negotiations, this is positive...and from this point

of view, this meeting in Washington can be useful," French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette said on RTL television.

Asked how France and other European powers could contribute as they had not been invited to Washington, de Charette said: "That is certainly unfortunate. That is certainly not a positive step for things to go forward."

France has repeatedly offered to play a central role in

the search for common ground between Israel and the Palestinians after violence last week in which nearly 70 people were killed.

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov arrived in Morocco on Sunday for a 48-hour official visit, and said Israel should put an end to actions against Palestinians and respect the feelings of Moslems. He met King Hassan at the royal palace of Skhirat, 12 miles south of Rabat. Earlier he hailed a UN Security Council vote calling for the immediate resumption of the Middle East peace process. The United States abstained in the vote. The resolution, with the backing of the 14 other Security Council members, called for the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians to be ensured and for the immediate resumption of the Middle East peace process.

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# the peace process from destruction?

**Netanyahu vows tunnel will remain open 'always'**

PATRICK COCKBURN  
Jerusalem

Israel reopened yesterday the gate to the tunnel under the Muslim quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, the opening of which last week led to the deaths of 55 Palestinians and 14 Israelis.

Binjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, earlier told a rally of fundamentalist Christians that the tunnel "is open, it will stay open. It will always stay open."

Mr Netanyahu and his advisers ruled out any concessions over the tunnel and threatened to delay further withdrawal of Israeli forces from Hebron. David Bar-Ilan, an extreme right-winger who is a close aide of the Prime Minister, said the government might have to consider disarming the 30,000-strong Palestinian police if violence continued.

He added: "If such things will continue and such incidents will recur, we will have to think about that."

The refusal to close the tunnel and the threats to disarm the Palestinian police, which would inevitably mean the Israeli army invading Gaza and the Palestinian autonomous enclaves on the West Bank, is increasing tension. Mr Netanyahu continues to insist that there was "nothing spontaneous" about the riots last week, and appears to underestimate the anger among ordinary Palestinians.

When Yasser Arafat was asked by an Israeli reporter if, as alleged by the Israeli government, he had exploited the opportunity provided by the opening of the tunnel to cause a crisis, the Palestinian leader said: "Wait a minute. If you knew that we were waiting for an opportunity, why did you supply one?" He denied that any Palestinian police officer had ordered his men to fire.

It was easy to see yesterday in the Via Dolorosa, on to which the steel gate opens, how the tunnel is already silencing the religious status quo in the city. The tunnel exits in the heart of the Muslim quarter of the Old City, and to protect the gate the street is filled with blue-uniformed Jerusalem police in flak jackets and long batons.

Palestinians walking to their homes were stopped by a line of police blocking the Via Dolorosa. Three plain clothes security men loomed over a grey metal hench nearby. As in Hebron, where a small number of settlers is protected by a large number of soldiers, the continual presence of Israeli security forces will make it difficult for



Narrow view: An Israeli patrol in the Jerusalem tunnel yesterday. Photograph: AP

Palestinians to live and work in the area. Mr Bar-Ilan said that Palestinian shopkeepers welcomed the increased custom brought by the tunnel, but the curio shops next to the new gate were on strike yesterday.

**The potential of a renewal of violence is there every minute'**

Although Mr Netanyahu and the Israeli government insist that the purpose of the tunnel is purely touristic and archaeological, this demonstrably untrue. Its significance has always been primarily religious. Part of it was dug illegally in the 1980s by fundamentalist Jews. The end of the tunnel closest to the Wailing Wall is used by ultra-orthodox men to pray away from the presence of women. Visitors are asked to wear a paper skull-cap. Elsewhere on the West Bank yesterday there was little violence. Demonstra-

tors were dispersed by Palestinian police.

General Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, the Israeli chief of staff, said: "The field is completely unstable. The potential of a renewal of violent events is there, every minute." He said the army could not live with the present situation for long. It has already implemented a plan entitled "Briar of Thorns", which covages progressive escalation if the violence continues, culminating in a military assault on Palestinian强点.

The prospect of a wider war stemming from the crisis is for the first time being taken seriously in Israel. The daily *Ma'ariv* asks: "Is the war in the [occupied] territories likely to degenerate, causing a war between Israel and Syria, and a blow to the peace with Egypt?" The newspaper also asks if Mr Netanyahu consulted with army and security officials when he took the decision to open the tunnel.

Western diplomatic officials say that the real figure for armed Palestinian police may be as high as 60,000 and reoccupation of the autonomous enclaves would spark a conflict which would go on for months.

There is little sign that the crisis over the tunnel has led Mr Netanyahu to rethink his strategy. Since he came to power after winning the general election in May he has delayed implementing stages of the Oslo accords already agreed, notably the evacuation of Hebron, redeployment of troops on the rest of the West Bank, and the release of prisoners.

Mr Netanyahu appears to believe that Palestinian political expectations were inflated by the over-conciliatory policies of the last government. He does not believe that Palestinian nationalism may have its own dynamic. To reduce expectations he inflicted a series of slights on Palestinians, such as knocking down a home for the disabled, refusing to let Mr Arafat's helicopter travel between the West Bank and Gaza and, finally, opening the tunnel. Against the evidence of the last week Mr Netanyahu appears to believe that if he shows that he is tough the Palestinians will moderate their demands.

Leading article, page 13

**Women's rights come under siege in Afghanistan, page 11**



On the run: An Israeli soldier puts on his helmet as stones are hurled at security forces guarding the new tunnel exit yesterday. Photograph: AP

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# International

**US elections:** As Clinton surveys an increasingly favourable landscape, his Republican rival is fading further into the distance



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# Dole trails in crucial Midwest states

**RUPERT CORNWELL**  
Washington

Their itineraries last Friday said it all. President Bill Clinton was barnstorming in Texas, where the Democrats have not won since 1976. Bob Dole was in Florida, trying to protect the electoral votes of a state which for exactly as long has been unrepresented. Republicans

been unwaveringly Republican. With little more than five weeks to go before the election, Mr Dole remains 12 to 15 per cent behind the President in almost every poll. Admittedly the latest CNN/USA Today survey places the gap at only 9 per cent, compared to some 20 per cent a fortnight ago, but the dynamic of the contest has shown little real change since before the summer conventions. And even a nine point margin translates into an electoral college landslide. In 1988 George Bush defeated Michael Dukakis by "only" 53 per cent to 46 per cent. He swept the electoral college 426 to 111.

Today, the Republican challenger is virtually off the board in traditionally Democratic states. He is far behind in states (notably across the industrial Midwest) which he must win to capture the White House) and as the time spent in Florida, Virginia and elsewhere shows, is

ginia and elsewhere shows, is running only level in states which normally are Republican strongholds.

Outwardly the Dole camp professes confidence: the President's support is soft, it insists, and argues that this weekend's first one-on-one Presidential debate, which the plain spoken Mr Dole enters very much as the oratorical underdog, may change everything. Thus far however, nothing else has – neither Mr Dole's promised but widely disbelieved 15 per cent tax cut, nor his attacks on Mr Clinton's alleged liberalism, nor his advertising campaign's increasingly direct attempts to raise the celebrated Clinton "character" question.

Tacitly admitting its diffi-

Representatives, which they lost in 1994 for the first time in four decades, and polls suggest they might. The margin in the Senate is, on paper, smaller: only four of the 100 seats need to change hands for the Democrats to recapture a majority. In practice, however, the task may be more difficult.

Mr Clinton, who has built his own recovery since the dark days of late 1994 on keeping his distance from Congress, is now actively campaigning on behalf of Democratic House and Senate candidates. Meanwhile, Haley Barbour, the Republican chairman, has been obliged to deny reports his party is diverting resources from Mr Dole to the Congressional cam-

Leading article, page 13

# Bargaining secures huge federal budget

Washington (AP) — Weary United States legislators approved a huge spending Bill and tighter immigration laws on Saturday, handing victories to both Republicans and Democrats just five weeks before the election and moving Congress to the verge of a shutdown.

White House and Congressional negotiators, bears political points for both sides. Final approval will allow Republicans to avoid a rerun of last year's federal shutdowns when the new fiscal year begins tomorrow.

Mr Clinton gets the \$6.5

By an overwhelming 370-37 roll call, the House of Representatives shipped the package combining both measures to the Senate. That chamber seemed likely to vote for final Congressional approval today and send it to President Bill Clinton for his promised signature. The House vote was the chamber's last major business of 1996, and let members of the first Republican-controlled Congress in 40 years hit the campaign trail.

The Bill, completed at sunrise after all-night bargaining by

# Women of Kabul hide behind veil of fear as Taliban banish them from the streets

**Sarah Horner**  
reports from  
Afghanistan's  
capital, newly  
conquered by  
fundamentalists

Women in the Afghan capital, Kabul, woke up last Friday morning to find the whole culture of their city had changed following the Taliban take-over. As the fundamentalist militia had swept towards the city, the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani was forced to retreat north.

At dawn on Saturday, Islamic clerics broadcast a new code of behaviour from the loudspeakers of mosques. Women should stay at home, the edict said. If they ventured out, they should be covered from head to toe. And they should not work.

By yesterday, hardly any women dared venture outside and there were reports of women being beaten by the roadside in the south of the city for being "inappropriately" dressed. Women's organisations have closed and it seems that many of their members have left Kabul. Girls' schools have been closed as female teachers are not able to go to work.

Hospitals are also suffering. All are staffed by a large number of female doctors and nurses. The situation is so bad that the Taliban have broadcast on local radio appealing for all male doctors to come into work.

Those women who could not or did not want to leave Kabul are trying to adjust to a life which is totally alien to everything they know.

None of the women I spoke to would let me use their names or identify them in any way. Some said Kabul had become a huge prison. Others felt as if they were dead; one said she wished she was dead.

"I have to go out to work," she said. "I can't stay at home. If I go out, I will be killed. But it's better for me if I am killed."

In a city where 18 years of war have left an estimated 25,000 widows, many are the sole supporters of large families.

"What should we eat?" said one young woman who is supporting five other people. "If I can't work, what will they do?"

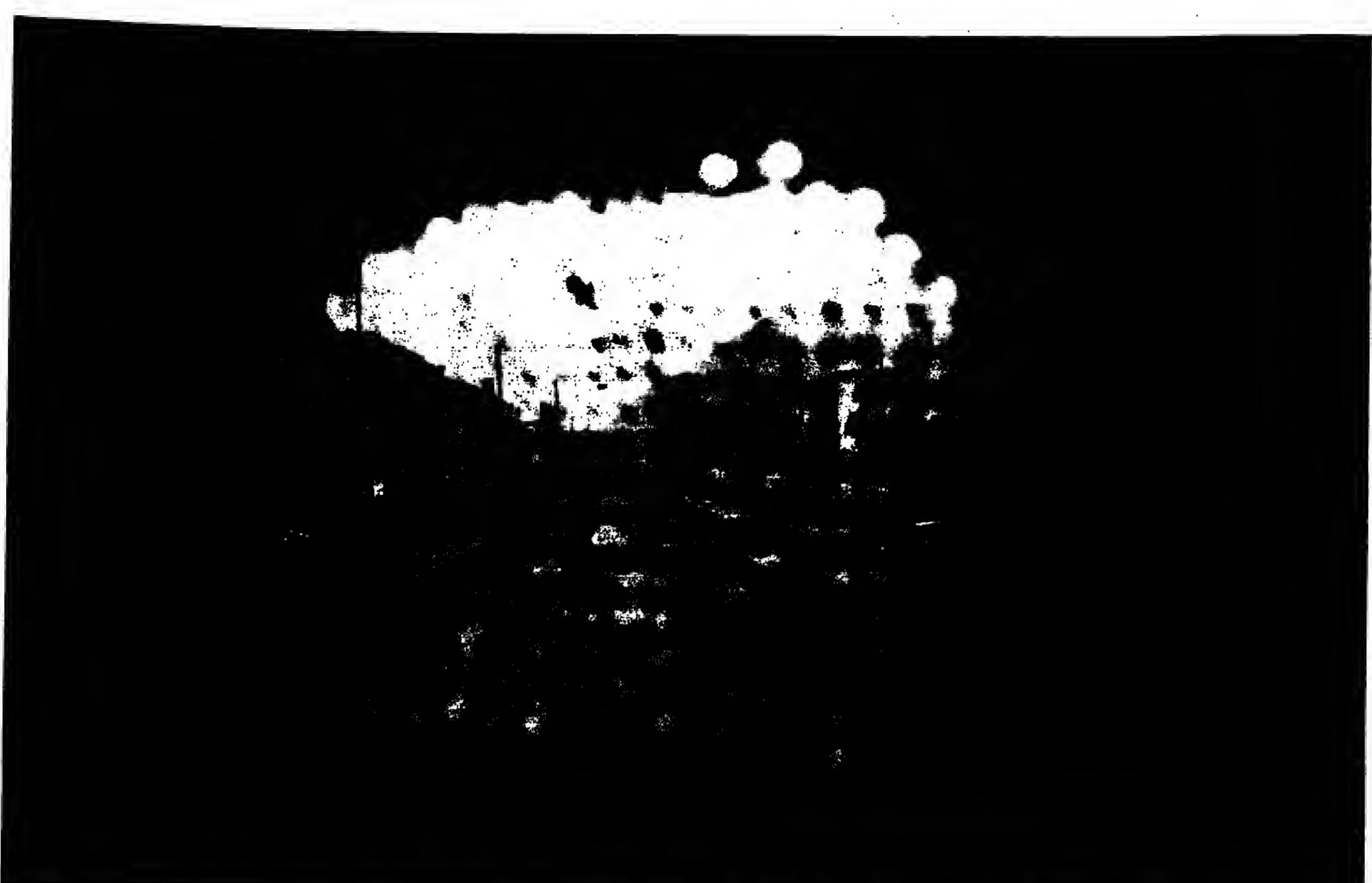
All the women expressed anger that the Taliban are using Islam to deny them human rights. They said that nowhere in the Koran does it say that women have to stay at home. "If Islam is like this," said one woman, who supports six people, "then I am not a Muslim."

The Koran, they say, guarantees equal rights to men and women.

The president of the Islamic Women's Movement of Afghanistan, Amena Safi Afzali, said last month that the Taliban have no knowledge of Islam. The Koran, she said, allows women to work, learn and participate fully in society.

"The things that the Taliban are doing," she said, "are not only against the principle of Islam but are also against the principles of human rights."

The United Nations' special envoy to Afghanistan, Norbert



Shut in: The view from inside a burqa, a veil which covers a woman from head to toe, with a mesh for the eyes. Women are beaten if they are 'inappropriately' dressed

Photographs: Seamus Murphy

Holl, said yesterday he saw hopeful signs in talks with the Taliban on issues such as women's rights. The UN employs many women and has already suspended educational activities in areas previously captured by the Taliban.

Mr Holl said he had discussed the role of women along with human rights in a two-hour meeting with the Taliban's interim shura, or council. "I hope this does not remain a dialogue

**I have to go out to work. If Islam is like this, then I am not a Muslim'**

with both sides sitting on principles," he said. "I hope we can find some practical solutions. I had indications for some hope." Mr Holl refused to elaborate.

The restrictions have also hit the press: a woman journalist working for Associated Press was barred from attending a news conference by Mullah Mohammed Rabban, the leader of Kabul's newly formed governing council. But women in Kabul



Locked out: Girls cannot be educated as their schools have to close because female teacher must not work

to support the campaign for political rights for women said: "I believe in it and support it, but I don't see the wisdom in a strike."

Women make up more than 50 per cent of the 700,000 Kuwaiti population. A female civil servant who has been wearing a blue ribbon for weeks

for the right to vote, while struggling to persuade more women to join their movement. Kuwaiti women, the most liberal in the region, run businesses, head diplomatic missions and help to run the country's oil industry.

Hind al-Idwai, one of the organisers of the rally, said the group had collected the signatures of about 600 women and

400 men in support of their campaign - "a good start if you take into consideration only two weeks of rallying support".

Only one of the 248 parliamentary candidates attended the rally. Women were urged to accept an invitation later to attend an election campaign by the left-leaning Abdullah al-Naibari, a pan-Arab nationalist. On election day, the

protesters plan to march to Bayan Palace, the government's headquarters.

Kuwait's women are not alone in their 30-year-old struggle. Some of the Western powers which helped to free Kuwait from Iraqi occupation in 1991 are privately urging the country to give women political rights, diplomats said.

"If we can at least gain the

right to vote in the next election [in 2000], it would be a great achievement in our region," Waifi Atiqi, a human rights activist and parliamentarian journalist, said.

The debate was revived in 1992 when Kuwait's parliament was restored but both the assembly and the government appeared reluctant to introduce the reform.

## Hundreds of Kuwaitis join campaign for female rights

ASHRAF FOUD  
Reuter

KUWAIT - Some 300 Kuwaiti men and women yesterday held a rally to demand political rights for women, who have been told they must wait until the next century before they might be allowed to take part in parliamentary elections.

The activists gathered at

Kuwait's lawyers' society to demand that women be given the right to stand for parliament or at least to vote. However, thousands of professional women ignored the rally and a call for a strike.

Women make up more than 50 per cent of the 700,000 Kuwaiti population. A female civil servant who has been

wearing a blue ribbon for weeks to support the campaign for political rights for women said: "I believe in it and support it, but I don't see the wisdom in a strike."

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## 12 international

Ex-soldier  
is named  
as Palme's  
assassin

Johannesburg (AP) - The man who assassinated the Swedish prime minister Olof Palme in 1986 is a former Rhodesian soldier linked to South African security officials, a newspaper said yesterday.

The Sunday Independent said Dirk Coetzee, a former police official accused of murder, had identified the gunman as Anthony White.

Coetzee, who in the past has revealed apartheid death squad activities, said White, a former soldier in a tough Rhodesian army unit, was a close associate of the former South African spy Craig Williamson, who has been implicated in the assassination.

A report in 1992 by the Environmental Investigation Agency on illegal ivory trading also identified White as an associate of Williamson, who was implicated in Palme murder by Eugène de Kock, a former police colonel.

Palme was an outspoken critic of apartheid and had angered the South African government by pressing for tougher sanctions against the country.

Swedish detectives had previously heard of an alleged South African link but have revived their investigation of it following de Kock's testimony.

"Suddenly we have a person who could talk about the case, a deputy prosecutor, Solveig Riberdahl, said. She wants Swedish police to go to South Africa to investigate the new claims.

# Commonwealth presses Nigeria over democracy

DAVID USBORNE  
New York

Commonwealth 'on the best way forward in the dispute. An earlier attempt to send a fact-finding mission to Nigeria had to be abandoned after the government of General Sani Abacha set stringent conditions on the access that would be extended to it.

Those conditions appeared yesterday still to apply to any mission that might go to Nigeria now. The authorities in Abuja, the Nigerian capital, have insisted that any such Commonwealth delegation should only be allowed to see members of the government and could interview human rights campaigners or any opposition groups. They also reject any suggestion that the Commonwealth has the right to interfere in, or even to monitor, Nigeria's planned three-year transition back to democracy.

British officials acknowledged that there were differences inside the group and insisted that Mrs Chalker was attending the meeting with an open mind.

Among Commonwealth countries, Canada has been particularly outspoken in urging a strong line on Nigeria. There was still some doubt last night whether the Canadian Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, would accept sending a delegation if the same Nigerian conditions are to apply. Mr Axworthy caused an open rift several days ago when he

denounced as "appeasers" some of his colleagues in the Action Group. The countries in the group are Britain, Canada, Jamaica, Ghana, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and New Zealand.

Last week, Mr Axworthy said publicly that he believed that sending a delegation to Nigeria would be pointless if its members were restricted in who they could actually see. It was especially important for them to see opposition members, he said. Other members of the Action Group seem concerned that some dialogue has to be maintained between Abuja and the Commonwealth.

British officials acknowledged that there were differences inside the group and insisted that Mrs Chalker was attending the meeting with an open mind.

There is also concern that Nigeria will take the dispatch of the mission the wrong way - not as a message of continuing concern over its policies but rather as a precursor of its automatic return to full membership of the Commonwealth.

Most observers agree, however, that only an oil embargo would seriously capture Nigeria's attention.

Peking takes hard line on 'offensive' Microsoft



Walk on by: People passing a Microsoft Windows 95 billboard advertisement in Peking yesterday. Photograph: AFP

Peking (Reuters) - Microsoft Corp has been forced to stop shipping its Chinese language Windows 95 computer software in China after the discovery of politically offensive phrases hidden in the software, officials said yesterday.

Peking has ordered the United States computer giant to halt sales of the mainland China version of Windows 95 and to cut out the offending language, a Chinese software official said. Chinese computer users said the phrases included the once commonly used Taiwan epithet "communist bandits" and "Taiwan independence", a phrase likely to infuriate Peking, as well as a map of China without Taiwan.

A free software update designed to eliminate the offending phrases would be posted on the Internet and be sent to all registered users and distributed to re-

tailers, said Microsoft spokesman Bryan Nelson. He added that the offending material appeared to have been introduced by contracted programmers in Taiwan.

The discovery of the phrases once favoured by Peking's Nationalist rivals in Taiwan has marred a hard-won return to Chinese favour by the firm after it moved its Greater China headquarters from Taiwan to Hong Kong.

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INSTRUMENTS FOR PROFESSIONALS

## Japan's star puts new meaning into girltalk

Local hero Namie Amuro

Tokyo — Japanese, a language promiscuously open to neologisms, has recently added a new term to its lexicon: *Amuraa*, a proper noun describing a breed of young women ubiquitous in the fashionable parts of Tokyo.

The typical *Amuraa* is 16 years old, and is identified by her uniform of black boxer boots, clinging mini-skirt, and navel-baringly short T-shirt. Her long black hair is dyed auburn, her eyebrows are crisply pencilled, and she wears metallic lipstick. By day, she endures the indignity of high school; her spare time, and her generous pocket money, are spent in record shops and boutiques, immersed in the music and fashion of her role model — Namie Amuro.

Having entered the language, Amuro is probably the most famous 18-year-old in Japan, and surely one of the richest. Her face is everywhere — on magazines, television programmes, and advertisements for everything from diet snacks to cassettes. Within a fortnight of its release this summer, her latest pop album, *Sweet 19 Blues*, had become the best selling Japanese recording of all time and so far has sold more than 4 million copies. By the standards of Japanese pop *aidoru* (idols), Amuro is a talented singer and dancer. But along with a dozen of the country's most successful pop acts, she owes her stardom to Tetsuya Komuro: impresario, image maker, and the most powerful man in Japanese pop.

Japan is the second biggest consumer of recorded music in the world and, within this lucrative world, Komuro is a one-man industry. Apart from composing music, writing lyrics, programming synthesizers, and producing recordings, he is a tireless promoter of his various protégés, as a radio DJ and TV presenter. Last year the records he produced made 26.8bn yen (£160m). This April five of the month's top-ten best sellers were Komuro productions.

The only things Komuro cannot do are sing and dance, and to compensate for this he has developed a shrewd eye for the nymphets necessary for the propagation of his music. There is no shortage of eager young talent and, with admirable economy, Komuro has turned his talent-scouting activities into a *New Faces*-style television programme on which aspirant songstresses make their debut. The most successful contestants will be admitted to the so-called Komuro Family.

Persistent rumour has it that the family is not all it seems and that relations between the 37-year-old Daddy and his teenage "daughters" are said to go beyond the professional. Komuro is often accused of having a *Roxi-Con* [a Japanisation of *Lolita* complex]. A blistering unauthorised biography published last month (*Tetsuya Komuro: The Glory and the Failure*) painted a sordid picture of woman-

ising, exploitation and drug abuse.

In fact, the source of many of the rumours may well be Komuro himself. His current lover is 22-year old Tomomi Kahala. ("Her voice stimulates the tear ducts," is how he explains the attraction) and he has spoken frankly of the commercial benefits of their union.

"When she is just becoming well known, she could say: 'The man I'm singing about in my song is Japan's number one record producer,'" he told an interviewer. "If it doesn't sell, it's meaningless. I think of myself as a Steven Spielberg. He has created a system that never loses money. Even if he failed he would still make some money out of it."

Richard Lloyd Parry



Amuro: Japanese pop icon

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# A global policeman must be worldly-wise

**A**round the world, from Kabul to Jerusalem, Belfast to Port-au-Prince, American diplomatic missions had put up the shutters: normal service was to be resumed on 8 November. The presidential election over, the United States would pick up the reins. But the world does not work that way. However much President Clinton might have wished for a quiet time, Israeli construction crews and Palestinian rock-throwers saw to that. Perhaps, had Israel commanded more American attention in recent weeks, the events of recent days might have been put off. But after such violence Mr Clinton had little choice but to intervene. Who else could fill the role? An American-brokered summit looks like the only way to get Messrs Arafat and Netanyahu to sit down together.

On past evidence of two-term presidencies, foreign affairs will get more of the attention of a man who has clearly matured in office. It is difficult to generalise across an array of situations and gauge how valuable or harmful is the American presence, military or diplomatic. What can be said is that during his first term of office, Mr Clinton has rushed and stumbled; American intervention has often been half-baked, answering to no easily identifiable principles or strategic calculation. The hope for Mr Clinton if he wins in November is that he will have

the breathing space and judgement to choose his ground with more care. American strategic interests will inevitably propel the president's attention towards certain regions, notably the Pacific Rim and China and the Arabian peninsula. There can surely be no part of the world which might not profit from American "good offices", such as the impartial chairmanship of a Senator Mitchell. But where the United States has no direct interests, too often American involvement is cloudy and unfocused. Just what is the American view of the future of the United Nations?

Northern Ireland may be a case where American absence might have been more valuable than American presence. In Northern Ireland President Clinton celebrated peace prematurely. His investment in Gerry Adams has produced precious little return – in terms of IRA policy, that is. Mr Adams will doubtless have gained some extra sales for his self-serving memoirs. On his return to office, Mr Clinton might be advised to treat Ireland strictly under the terms of his vaunted global initiative against terrorism and seal up any American conduits that remain open. For the rest, it is a matter for Dublin, London and Belfast.

President Clinton backed the wrong horse in the Israeli elections and so was left with little or no personal leverage over the winner, Binyamin Netanyahu.

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Israel remains one of the strongest lobbies in American politics and while there may just be votes in facing down the gun owners of America, there are precious few for a Democrat in talking harshly about the conduct of Israeli leadership. Virtually every piece of new building on the West Bank (and demolition) is directly or indirectly financed by the United States through subsidies and loan guarantees. In his second term Mr Clinton may accomplish more by intervening less – for example normalising relations with Israel by requiring of its government the same standards of conduct as the

United States expects and demands of other favoured allies. But for the time being, the best he can hope for – for the sake of the belligerents – is to get them talking and keep them talking so as to restore the status quo ante tunnel.

President Clinton came to power promising to concentrate on the domestic agenda. He enters the November election able to claim that employment and the economy have improved during his term. He has matured in office and now has around him a formidable military and diplomatic apparatus. But if he is next to turn himself into a "foreign policy"

president we probably need to be wary – not because he lacks capacity but because he has yet to demonstrate he can knuckle down and think through the longer-term basis of American engagement. In Russia, the problem has been not so much been the president's exaggeration of his personal relationship with Boris Yeltsin as the lack of an American strategy for dealing with tumultuous Russia, whoever is in power.

There are two reasons why we might hope President Clinton might on re-election take time to think. One is that many Americans are far from convinced it is that nation's manifest destiny to be the world's policeman and diplomat; for them intervention is only really justified if high moral principles are at stake. American foreign policy, far more say than British, retains an ethical dimension. That in turn means there will always be a tension in American policy leading to hesitations and confusions. The popular wish, in any given situation, will be to try to identify the guys in the white hats – in a world where dim shades of grey are the norm. Since the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, confusion has reigned: the CIA-backed guerrillas and they now turn out to be a potential source of regional instability – though hardly likely, as Sunnis, to make common cause with their Shia neighbours in Iran and, potentially, useful coun-

terweights to fundamentalists in Pakistan. Not an easy game for a foreign policy president anxious to be seen to be pursuing the Right.

The other reason has to do with responsibility. Mr Netanyahu ultimately has to treat with Yasser Arafat however much lubrication Mr Clinton can supply the relationship. The sooner the Israeli leader buckles down to that, the better. A hovering Uncle Sam must not be an excuse to put off that necessary day.

## Big cars, little women

**F**ull marks for anatomy to Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, quoted yesterday in his capacity as curator of motor cars as saying women have a different build from men. They do. A study concludes that women are more likely to be injured in car accidents (not, mark you, injure others) because they have more difficulty in seeing the road because they are too small. Sorry, that should read, the cars they drive are too big. You might think that the manufacturers of cars would reflect that fact. The fact they have not is a clear case of victimisation. Perhaps the recent advertisements aimed at women are a sign of change. Not before time.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Jewish horror at Israeli leader's action

Sir: I do not write as a spokesperson for anyone but those who are humane in both heart and actions – people of all origins: those who have suffered and survived, and those who have not survived that suffering.

As my name implies, I am of one of the semitic origins, and I believe that many, many other Jews, including my family, friends and mentors share my outrage concerning this cruelly shattered peace ("Israel unrepentant after killings at Muslim shrine", 28 September).

As for myself, no words are adequate to describe my total horror at the blasphemous brutality and arrogance of the present Israeli "leader", whose name I cannot even bear to utter.

Surely someone who will not admit responsibility, who blames another, displays (in this case both shamelessly and publicly) a nature of despicable weakness and vanity, which Israel does not deserve.

I know that there are a multitude of other Jews who share my sadness and outrage: to them I send my love and respect and solidarity.

Ishmael and Isaac were brothers. As an Isaac I apologise deeply to my brother Ishmaels whose holy places have been desecrated.

The Hon MIRANDA ROTHSCHILD  
London

### Paper industry can do better

Sir: Richard North ("Greenpeace, please grow up!", 26 September) referred to a report on the pulp and paper industry by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIE). While we welcome Mr North's praise of our report *Towards a Sustainable Paper Cycle*, we need to clarify certain points.

Richard North implies that IIE has given a blanket seal of approval to the paper industry, which he considers to be "more or less an track" with respect to environmental performance. In fact, our report singles out a number of areas where industry is clearly not on track.

For example, the report finds that paper is a net contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, despite industry claims of the carbon uptake potential of plantations. This is mainly due to high energy consumption in processing and methane emissions from paper that is landfilled.

The report also finds that industry environmental performance is highly variable, with unacceptable levels of emissions from some plants in all major producing countries.

The report advocates independent (third-party) certification of paper products and is supportive of eco-labelling initiatives, whereas much of the industry has traditionally been hostile to these approaches or resisted on purely voluntary self-monitoring.

Our report concludes that there is very little evidence of difference, in terms of environmental impact, between elemental chlorine-free (ECF) and totally chlorine-free (TCF) bleaching. However we do oppose the use of elemental chlorine, a traditional bleaching agent.

In April on the morally contested issue of paper consumption, we were more than clear:



### Small firms fear self-assessment

Sir: Your report "Self-assessment causes chaos at Inland Revenue" (26 September) explains the problems within the Revenue but not the difficulties caused to those who will have to deal with self-assessment.

As I travel round the country meeting small firms they tell me of their concerns about self-assessment and the mandatory fines it will entail. In the light of these concerns you might expect ministers to be keen to ensure that businesses have all the information they need so that forms can be filled in correctly. Yet during the summer it was decided that only firms with over 100 employees would receive a guidance pack on self-assessment.

Given that large firms are likely to have whole departments who can advise on this kind of matter it seemed bizarre that they should be given this help, whilst small firms were left to fend for themselves. I wrote to the Chancellor about this on 17 September, and on 23 September the Revenue announced that in a change of plan they would be sending information packs to firms with over 50 employees. They seem to have missed the point.

The Labour Party does not have a problem with the principle of self-assessment but we believe it has been introduced over-hastily and in a chaotic manner. It should not be small firms who pick up the pieces.

BARBARA ROCHE MP  
(Hornsey and Wood Green, Lab)  
Shadow Small Business Minister  
House of Commons  
London SW1

### State schools are worth our taxes

Sir: It is good to know that Helen Clemons and other parents ("If the state school is fine, why pay?", 26 September) are coming to appreciate the benefits of our state education system.

But what is new? And why has the penny taken so long to drop? Twenty years ago our two daughters attended a comprehensive in St Albans and received an education at least as good, socially and academically, as that available in the private sector.

Of course it was not free. A state education system as good as ours requires substantial funding and we should be as willing to pay our taxes as we are enthusiastic about the benefits it brings.

Let us hope that the parents who can afford, but choose not to spend, £40,000 on their child's secondary education will see that a bit more contributed to the public purse is a better use of their money than "skiing trips or extra holidays".

DONALD ROBERTSON  
Harpenden, Hertfordshire

### Real reason for Wilson resigning

Sir: As a former biographer of Harold Wilson (Letters, 27 September), I am astonished at how many have missed the real key to his premature resignation provided some months ago by the former Conservative MP Dr Tom Sutcliffe.

Wilson told Dr Sutcliffe that his mother had suffered from senile dementia, or Alzheimer's, which had converted her from a widely respected ex-teacher into a figure of ridicule. As confirmed by his chief press officer, my friend Joe Haines, Wilson's mind did begin to go in his last weeks in office.

One wonders whether this public disclosure of a medical cause for Wilson's early retirement was ignored by the director of the TV programme concerned because of poor research or the belief that Wilson's paranoia about the security service provided a "sexier" TV climax.

ANDREW ROTH  
London NW2

### Charity pests

Sir: Andrew Gentler (Letters, 27 September) complains of charities' requests for money after he made donations. I write to the charities I support explaining that the enclosed Charities Aid Foundation voucher is an annual donation. I threaten to deduct £5 from next year's donation for each unsolicited mailing received within the next ten months. Some charities have amended their computer systems.

BRYAN VERNON  
Newcastle upon Tyne

### Banana woman

Sir: I am the woman in banana mentioned by Suzanne Moore ("The awfulness of Daddy Paddy's army", 27 September), and what a wonderfully discerning and apposite record of the events of the Liberal Democrat conference it is.

One small correction: my companion at the "Voices of Women" fringe meeting referred to is a Labour Party member. I am a broken-hearted feminist looking for a home for her political allegiances.

Sylvia Alexander-Vine  
Brighton, East Sussex

### Pigeons deserve a fairer deal

Sir: The feral pigeon ("London's pigeon problems come to roost", 17 September) is no more hazardous to man than any other animal species and is safer than most.

Finally, with respect to sources of funding for the study, your readers may be interested to know that over 40 per cent of the research budget came from non-industry sources, including the European Commission and the International Finance Corporation (a United Nations agency). Additional funding was raised by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

RICHARD SANDBROOK  
Executive Director, IIE  
London WC1

Sir: Richard D North has hit the nail on the head sideways. He is being disingenuous if he thinks "industry does what its customers want" is more than a basic truth.

Consumers choose finished products, but do not have a say in the details of their manufacture. The environmental and social costs of making a product are hidden from public view.

Until Greenpeace spotlighted the practice, how many consumers of a certain brand of digestive biscuits were aware that manufacturing them relied on the use of unsustainable harvested fish oil?

Greenpeace must continue to put the spotlight on industry to make sure that proper environmental and social auditing is carried out at every stage of the manufacturing process.

T.D. HOLT-WILSON

rates. Only a minority of pigeons attempt to breed. The larger the pigeon flock, the lower the reproduction rate is.

Research also shows that culling would lead to high population regeneration rates, with pigeons immigrating from elsewhere and a fall in natural mortality rates. Besides, under European and UK law, priority should be given to non-lethal management methods.

Pigeon numbers are invariably overestimated. The cost of cleaning Trafalgar Square includes the man-hours for removing human litter, which far exceed the man-hours for washing away droppings.

DR J. CUTBERT  
Hornsey  
Surrey

Increasingly, research is showing that interaction with animals is in fact highly beneficial to human emotional and physical health, and on this basis animals are being introduced into some hospitals.

On the other hand, evidence of pathogen transmission from the food we buy and from fellow human beings is overwhelming.

Pigeon droppings are chemically incapable of corroding anything. They are safer to buildings and metal structures than ordinary rainfall – let alone acid rain, which is destroying Britain's buildings and can damage metal. Britain is one of the largest exporters in the world of acid rain!

If uncultured, pigeon populations stabilise in function of their food base and have low reproduction

The wide mouth of the Firth is very exposed to westerly gales, the effects of which are worsened by the Solway's shallow waters and fast tides. Silting is a problem too: flood tides carry in and deposit far more sediment than ebb tides and the flow from the rivers can remove.

The cost of maintaining a dredged channel for shipping would be hopelessly prohibitive. If there really is a need for an east-west waterway, an expansion of the existing Forth-Clyde Canal, which has ports and deeper, more sheltered firths at each end, might prove to be a more rewarding venture.

HENRY EGGS  
Sale,  
Cheshire

### Future is fat

Sir: News of a plan for a Western Water Highway which would allow ships to cross northern England between Carlisle and Newcastle ("Waterway to follow Hadrian to the sea", 20 September) is heartening: it fires the imagination much as the Meresande Bay and Severn Estuary barrage schemes did in times past.

Those proposals, however, went on to absorb millions of pounds in feasibility studies, and before the Western Water Highway is allowed to do the same it would be prudent to consider the difficulty of using the Solway Firth as the western approach.

When Tony Blair becomes the next PM, to avoid accusations of new puritanism the most imaginative thing he could do would be to appoint, as his health adviser, the splendid ex-nurse Ms Jo Brand. We would all feel the better for it. Cakes and ale all round?

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number.  
(Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

July 1996

## essay

# Just another politician after all?

**Tony Blair hardly put a foot wrong until the Harman affair, but since then the mistakes have been coming thick and fast. Now his claims to a new political language and vision look decidedly less convincing.** By John Rentoul

**I**t all started at the moment of Tony Blair's greatest triumph. When he gave an impromptu speech to delegates at Labour's special conference after they approved the new Clause IV of the party's constitution in April last year, he made a joke. "I want to say something about the party's name," he said, and paused as delegates looked at each other in surprise. "It's staying as it is." It was an "in" joke, because it only meant something to party members aware of the sensitivity of suggestions that "Labour" was an out-of-date concept, which were made at the time of Hugh Gaitskell's doomed attempt to rewrite Clause IV in 1959. The subtlety was clear: "I could change the name if I wanted to, but I have decided not to do so at this time. Besides, I have already changed the name to New Labour without consulting you." It smacked of a disdain for the party by led, and John Prescott looked unmoved, although an intriguing detail, this – it had been "cleared" with him in advance.

The Clause IV vote marked the end of the first, triumphant phase of Blair's leadership, a nine-month honeymoon with both party and electorate. But since then the colour of Blair's leadership has darkened; it is still moderately dazzling, but perceptibly less so than before. Something deep and significant is going on: the weaknesses of

a Labour government are becoming clearer.

The extraordinary thing was how few errors Blair had made until last December, when Harriet Harman, one of the few Labour MPs who could be described as a personal friend, told him that her son had passed the exam to get into a selective grammar school. Blair's misjudgment was obvious in retrospect: he did nothing. The famed New Labour media management machine failed to minimise the damage caused when the decision became known – at a time of the *Mail on Sunday's* choosing – the following month.

This was partly because Alastair Campbell, the leader's press secretary, was personally deeply opposed to Harman's decision, which in itself ought to have warned Blair that he had misjudged the mood of the party.

The cause of comprehensive education is totemic in the Labour Party, with the issue of selection at the top of the totem pole. But even after the fuss about his own son's school – in which Roy Hattersley was reborn as a left-wing firebrand – Blair could not see it.

What could he have done? The news could have been released over Christmas instead of when MPs were at Westminster, and Harman could have given a personal interview to say what she told friends at the time: "It's easier to go through the eye of a needle than to be a good mother and a good politician."

Above all, they needed to work out an explanation for what she had done that could be communicated to the party and the people. Even now, the argument in defence of Blair and Harman's schooling decisions is flawed. Only yesterday in his *Mirror* interview, Blair repeated that he would not "sacrifice" his child to avoid a political row – implying that parents who do not choose the London Oratory are taking their children to the top of the nearest hill and cutting their hearts out.

The Harman affair confused Labour's message on education, and crystallised a certain unease voters felt about the slick new Labour Party – that "say one thing and do another". And the affair became entangled in the second important mistake of Blair's leadership. Harman had been forced to go public two days after Labour MPs clashed at their weekly meeting over the idea of abolishing this year's Shadow Cabinet elections.

Blair thought they were an unnecessary distraction, but once more failed to act early enough, again partly because he misjudged the mood of the party. It was not until the summer that he was finally forced to admit defeat and instead agreed to the next best option of bringing the elections forward from their usual November slot.

Thus Labour MPs who wanted to be helpful to their new leader and his rather unfamiliar "project", even if they

were not very good at it, found themselves forced to vote for the "leadership slate" of the existing team – or for a bunch of no-hoppers. This they did not like, but Blair might just have got away with it if he had not then compounded it with two further mistakes. First, his spokespeople told journalists that the leader was displeased with "wild" allegations of arm-twisting and vote-rigging and that there would be a review of the disciplinary rules for Labour MPs. Then Clare Short was demoted.

The first was unnecessary escalation, which spoke of Blair's genuine frustration with the more outlandish claims made by Ken Livingstone and Ann Clwyd. The elections were hardly "fair and free", but there were no ballot boxes stuffed with bundles of papers in the same hand.

The second sent shock waves through the wider party. Clare Short had not been tactful, and she had not made a stunning success of her transport brief. But for all her Sunday morning television interviews, which sent the doctors into a spin over tax or cannabis, Short was transparently a speak-your-mind politician who wanted Blair to win and to be part of New Labour, however alien it was to her kind of socialism.

It is unusual for the victim of an error to see clearly the lesson of their misfortune. But Short went to the heart of the problem when she said that the

message of her exile was to ask people to vote for New Labour on the basis that some of the people in it were nothing to do with the "absolutely appalling" old Labour Party. Still, it would have been better to keep Short on board so that she, as well as John Prescott, could embody the continuation of old Labour to new.

Since the Clause IV victory, Blair has said less about his distinctive views of morality, family and crime, and his language has become more artificial, with more of the inevitable evasions of political office. As a result people have paid less attention to what he has been saying, and other messages have become important: that he did not send his child to the local school; that his wife is an ambitious barrister who earns a lot of money; that his party squabbles.

And the obsession with being a "tough" leader is beginning to become counter-productive. Short's own demotion was the prime example: it begged the question, what was her crime?

Calling for a debate on the legalisation of cannabis and saying that people of all levels of income should pay more tax? A larger and more confident leader would have said that was just Clare thinking aloud, it is not the policy of the party. As a result, it was an act of discipline which spoke of weakness rather than strength.

There have been other mistakes, all illuminating the same weaknesses. Even before

Labour MPs were asked to take part in a meaningless re-election of the entire Shadow Cabinet, it emerged that Labour members would be asked to take part in a meaningless ballot on the contents of the draft manifesto. Before the manifesto, *New Life for Britain*, was published, journalists were told that there would be a process of "consultation" over the summer, before it is put to the vote at conference on Thursday and then to a referendum of all party members later next month.

It emerged that this meant consultation in the sense that Clare Short was consulted about her new post. The document that was published on July is the document members will vote on. The ballot paper will not offer a choice between "Yes, I would like to win the next election" and "No, I would prefer to stay in opposition", but it might as well, it is a cosmetic exercise designed to demonstrate that the party is united behind the leadership's programme and thus largely ineffective. The party, rather than being inspired, is sullen.

Then there was Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown's announcement in April that he wanted to abolish child benefit for those aged 16-18 and replace it with payments to those who need them to encourage young people to stay on at school or college. The second part of that sentence was hardly noticed. While Brown himself trumpeted this as evidence that

The revised paperback edition of *Tony Blair*, by John Rentoul, is published by Warner Books, £16.99.

he was prepared to take "tough decisions" about the welfare state, it was not clear until earlier this month that he was talking more about facing the Labour Party with the need to reconsider the sacred principle of universal benefits than facing the electorate with the need to provide for themselves.

And finally there was the mishandling of the referendum on a Scottish parliament. The main problem was that the news leaked in London rather than being announced in Scotland, as planned, but there was a devil-may-care boisterousness about Blair's defence of his policy afterwards which helped to annoy Scottish opinion even further.

Of course, Blair's response to these criticisms, especially the last one, is to say, "Very well, but that is what we are proposing right." And the answer, in cases of policy, is yes. The present system of child benefit for the older age group is anomalous, although it is a relatively minor anomaly, because teenagers who leave school do not get it. And a referendum in Scotland is right in principle and necessary to get the legislation through the Commons.

But the real question is how the changes are handled. The contrast between the mistakes of this year and Clause IV is telling. On Clause IV, Blair took to the road and argued his case directly with party members. Many of them did not like it, but his argument was better, and they had to accept it. But the debate on Clause IV was a genuine, one-unlike the passive approval demanded for the manifesto.

After the excitement of creating a new party within the shell of the old, Blair has been revealed for what he always was – a politician, albeit a striking, youthful, articulate and clever one. Part of this was inevitable, as his newness and image as a "normal person" rather than a politician, wore off. But part of it was an unnecessary squandering of what was so valuable about him when he was elected: that he spoke in a different language.

If Blair's mistakes have a theme, it is that they all speak of a failure to try to take people with him – a political virtue of which he has often spoken. This is not just the "old Labour" complaint about centralisation and needless provocation of the party, because it applies beyond the party too. The case for a Scottish referendum and for changes to child benefit seem insufficiently related to Blair's message to the country.

The paradox is that it is Blair who spoke of Margaret Thatcher as coming to confuse knowing her own mind with refusing to listen. When he became Labour leader, he made some large claims to a new politics, to a new language of moral community, to "say what we mean and mean what we say". These claims have been weakened this year. His task this week is to renew them.

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## A giant yellow footprint on our landscape



Miles  
Kington

that a good or a bad thing?" She screamed and said: "My God, is nowhere safe?" And why is it that America always exports the things I'm trying to get away from?"

That friend no longer visits Britain, but McDonald's has certainly meanwhile planted its giant yellow footprint on our landscape. In fact, it ruthlessly tries to plants its big yellow feet on anyone who remotely threatens its inexorable expansion.

It now seems clear that there must be a whole team of people at McDonald's keeping their eyes open for anyone opening an eating place which looks at all like a McDonald's eating place, so that they can ruin wrists on it.

You and I might wonder why anyone would want to open a place that reminded anyone of a McDonald's. Personally, I would never want to open a place that reminded people of McDonald's eating places; I would have it closed down immediately.

One day I was talking to her on the phone and I said:

"Who are McDonald's?" She said: "Why do you want to know?" I said: "Well, I have just seen an advert saying that the first McDonald's is about to open in the UK. Is

have instructions to ruthlessly crush anything that looks or sounds like them sent out a hit squad to stop Mrs Blair using "Mc" on the front of Munchies, even though she had only used it to suggest a Scottish flavour.

These bully-boy tactics, which have all the elegance of stepping on a man in the scrum, or hitting your opponent after the bell has gone, are odd to find in a company which supposedly cares about its gentle image. Of course, the image of

McDonald's has been tarnished badly by the so-called McLibel case in which bully-boy McDonald's have been trying to squash two harmless protesters and which has gained McDonald's more bad publicity than it would be possible to buy.

In my case, the image of McDonald's was equally tarnished by a personal visit to McDonald's eating place (I refuse to use the word "restaurant" about a fast food joint) and failing to derive any pleasure from the experience at all. I hope I never have to go inside a McDonald's again. The only disadvantage of never going

inside a McDonald's is that you can't boycott the place. One's immediate reaction to reading about McDonald's bully-boy tactic is to say, "All right, Mr Tough Guy, McDonald's, that's the last time I frequent one of your dump!" But if you have already sworn that, what can you do? It's the same with British Home Stores!

Received a circular from a Burmese pressure group the other day begging me not to buy things from British Home Stores, because of their trading links with the atrocious Burmese government, who are doing to democracy what McDonald's are doing to places called "McMunchies" and "McDeights" and "McDonuts". I would willingly comply,

except that to my knowledge, I have never bought a single thing from BHS and there is no known way of improving on that record.

Nor can I stop drinking American Budweiser beer in protest against this monstrous bullying because all the American beers I have tried were so soapy and dreary that I have never gone back for a second try. Still, I can at least go out and buy a few bottles of Budweiser Budvar to show my support. Anyone know any good Czech hambo joints?



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On 11th June Ahmed Menzue purchased a racing bike at auction for £14. The list price for the bike was £100. He gave it to his teenage son. Saving £86.

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# The white heat of a successful party conference



**Andreas Whittam Smith**

**As the Tories are never easy to defeat, Tony Blair would be wise to emulate Harold Wilson's 1963 Scarborough performance**

**It was in 1960 that Gaitskell finished his speech to the party conference with his famous oration: "There are some of us, Mr Chairman, who will fight and fight and fight again to bring back unity and honesty and dignity, so that our party with its great past may retain its glory and its greatness," he said, and sat down, sweating profusely, to cheers and boos. While a year later Gaitskell finally won the argument (16 months before his untimely death in January 1963), party managers feared that discord and disunity still remained close to the surface.**

## obituaries / gazette

## Leslie Crowther

Leslie Crowther was a great British all-rounder: straight actor, situation-comedy star, children's entertainer, game-show host, after-dinner speaker and tireless charity-worker.

He was born in Nottingham in 1933 and, though he moved to London in his teens, he never lost touch with the city which always knew him as a local boy made good. I knew him for 30 years, and the British public has known him even longer. There was no public image and separate private person about Leslie Crowther – they were one and the same person.

He made his first appearance on television in 1953 at the age of 20. The rest of the 1950s were spent consolidating a career that, over the next 30 years, seldom left him without a major role or series in which he starred.

He spent most of the 1960s with the BBC. In his early television work (*Hillbilly*, *Crackjack*, *The Black and White Minstrel Show*, *The Billy Cotton Band Show*), his experience in revue stood him in good stead.

He polished his skills in comedy sketches and musical items (he was a moderately accomplished pianist) and his to-camera work in stand-up routines was natural and relaxed.

It was this relaxed approach, together with his ability to adapt, that led to his being chosen to present the hugely successful children's show *Crackjack*, the BBC's *Christmas Morning Hospital* programme, and his own programmes on radio (*Crowther's Crowd*, *Variety Playhouse*) and on television, *Crowther Takes A Look*. In 1969 he appeared in *Let Sleeping Wives Lie* at the Garrick Theatre in London.



Crowther in 1988: 'If it makes for a better show, try and get Lassie too'

Crowther was a very easy, uncomplicated person to be friends with, and to work with. One keeps coming back to the phrase "he was always the same". Because he was friendly, enthusiastic, slightly noisy, and reliable.

Professionally, he never seemed flustered nor unset-

tled. Whatever he was doing had arrived (always wearing a tie and jacket – I cannot remember seeing him at work in an open-necked shirt and sweater) well-prepared, knowing his lines, or whatever else was required, the *Times* crossword nearly complete.

His rapport with television

crews and backstage theatre staff was well-known. He had as much time for them as he did for his producer or director. If he felt in safe hands he was easy to direct. He knew his trade, made his contribution, and got on with his job. He had a charming and attractive admiration for other people's talents

– especially those he called "real actors".

One of my firmest memories of him from that time was his enormous professional generosity. Two incidents come to mind. On his 1970 London Weekend series, a very nervous Larry Grayson, making his first

television appearance, to be said in their defence.

He was also very intelligent and inquisitive. Behind the

overran his six-minute spot to 11 minutes.

I suggested to Crowther that we cut one short sketch of his, thus retaining nine minutes of Larry Grayson. Crowther asked to see Grayson's piece, and immediately said, "Take my long sketch out, we can do it next week, and leave Larry's spot intact."

I also remember warning him that having a small repertory company which included Albert Modley, Arthur English and Chic Murray on the show each week was like breaking the "never appear with children or dogs" rule three times. The three of them were born scene-stealers – Chic Murray really did once read the telephone directory, to enormous laughs. Crowther's response was simply, "If it makes for better show, try and get Lassie too."

I have never known anyone who enjoyed what he was doing more than Crowther. He simply just loved his contact with people, whether they were an audience or not. When he put his arm around a middle-aged woman on a game-show, and called her "duck" (from his Nottingham upbringing), he meant it. Leslie Crowther and his audience were made for each other.

Privately, he was a kind man; and understanding of other people's shortcomings. He

hardly had a bad word to say about anyone, and, if a strong case could be found for putting someone down, he'd find the single redeeming thing to be said in their defence.

He was also very intelligent

and inquisitive. Behind the

"Come on down", and bright eyes and wide grin of the game-show host, was an alert mind. Intellectual games interested him; but then he also loved English seaside-postcard humour.

His work for charity was a major part of his life. The Stars' Organisation for Spastics and the Lord's Taverners (of which he was President 1991-92) were the high-profile side of this work. But Leslie Crowther did not need a major function nor the presence of a member of the Royal Family to turn up.

Literally hundreds of small local charities could rely on his arriving alone and unpublicised to open a new play-group, knock over a pile of pennies, or draw a raffle. In the months we spent together in Nottingham, he rarely did less than three of these "locals" (as he called them) in a week.

Crowther's private passion was cricket; it was the only thing he'd ever suggest that rehearsals might possibly be worked around.

The much-publicised problems in his private life hurt him deeply, but he kept the hurt to himself. He was sustained by a quiet Christian faith and a family which, for all its problems, supported each other against whatever they had to face. His wife Jean was his rock; his best friend.

William G. Stewart

*Leslie Douglas Sargent Crowther; actor and comedian; born Nottingham 6 February 1933; CBE 1993; married 1954 Jean Stone (one son; four daughters); died Bath 23 September 1996.*

## Maj-Gen Pat Turpin



Turpin knew the effect of running out of salt weeks into an operation

at the Middle East Staff College, Haifa. His first appointment was as Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General (DAQMG) in HQ British Troops in Egypt. He then returned to Haifa as an instructor for the whole of 1942. In early 1943 he became Assistant Quartermaster General (AQMG) to HQ 30th Corps. It was here that at last he was to play a vital part in the reorganisation of the army's diverse movement agencies into the new Royal Corps of Transport (RCT). After this many thought he should have been the first logistics service officer to become a lieutenant-general, but he was not operationally qualified to be placed on the selection list for an army command.

On his retirement in 1966 he became Colonel Commandant RCT until 1971 and Colonel of the Gurkha Army Service Corps until 1973. At last, with a lifetime of military service behind him, this basically quiet man could enjoy his retirement and his favourite hobbies of tennis and gardening. He was chairman of the Heather Society in 1975.

Pat Turpin was an English gentleman who played his military life by the book. Even under fire he carried out his task calmly and unhurriedly for he seemed just ahead of time. Little ever perturbed him. He was exact in everything he did. He once delayed in container of salt and pepper insisting that each one ounce packet be reweighed. He knew the effect of running out of salt several weeks into an operation.

He had a good sense of humour: in a report on one of his men he wrote "He gives no trouble, but takes none." He was a fine shot, a keen photographer, and an ardent ornithologist, but above all, he enjoyed his family and his military career.

Max Arthur

*Patrick George Turpin, soldier; born Torquay 27 April 1911; CB 1945; CB 1962; married 1947 Cherry Graw (one son, one daughter); died 14 September 1996.*

Born 1996 at 7.30pm at the Adelphi Theatre, Strand, Tickets £10 at £10 and £15. All proceeds to the "Friends of Vivian Ellis Prize" to encourage young writers for the musical stage.

## Births, Marriages &amp; Deaths

ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR GENEVIEVE BIRKBEES, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent to writing to the Genevieve Birkbees, The Independent, 1 Castle Street, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephone 0171-293 2811 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2021 or faxed to 0171-293 2810).

## DEATHS

**WILSON:** Dorothy Catherine (widow of David Butler Wilson), peacefully on 10 September, aged 98. Much loved mother of Christopher, Michael, Jean Macpherson, Anne Macmillan. Service of thanksgiving on Saturday 19 October at 4pm at St Mary's Church, Nether Alderley, Cheshire. No flowers. Donations in memory of Smallcombe House (Salvation Army), Bath BA2 6EJ.

## IN MEMORIAM

**FURTHY:** Mike, of the Covent Garden Craft Market, remembered for his dedication to design, cycling, Suffolk, fatherhood and his humour. Greatly missed.

**MEMORIAL SERVICES**

**ELLIS:** Vivian John Newman CBS HSC GSM, who died on 19 June 1996, aged 92. There will be a memorial celebration concert of the words and music of Vivian Ellis CBE, "Spread Little Happiness", on Sunday 6 Oct 2010.

BIRTHDAYS

**Sir Stanley Bailey**, former chief constable of Northumbria, 70; The Rev Gordon Barratt, former principal, The National Children's Home, and former president of the Methodist Conference, 76; Lord Steward, former government minister, 64; Sir Derek Birkin, chairman, KCAZ, 67; General Sir Edward Burgess, 69; Miss Stephanie Cole, actress, 55; Viscount Crambore, Lord Privy Seal, Prof. Sir Edie Denton, marine biologist, 73; Miss Angélique Dickinson, actress, 65; Sir Peter Fawcett, former Commissioner, Bechuanaland; Sir Stafford Gadd, chairman, J.S. Gadd & Co SA, Geneva, 62; Mrs Teresa Gorman MP, 65; Mr Anthony Green, painter, 57; Mr Alan Hacker, clarinettist and conductor, 85; The Right Rev Patrick Harries, Bishop of Southwell, 62; Miss Deborah Kerr, actress, 75; Miss Rula Lenska, actress, 49; Pro-

fessor Frank Llewellyn-Jones, former principal, University College of Swansea, 89; Mr Johnny Mathis, bailed singer, 61; Mr Ian Ogilvy, film actor, 53; Mr Andrew Palmer, former ambassador to the Holy See, 59; Mr John Spiers, publisher, and chairman, Trident Trust, 55; Mr Stewart Steven, former editor of the London Evening Standard, 61; Sir Peter Yarranton, former chairman, Sports Council, 72.

## ANNIVERSARIES

BIRTHS: Etienne de Condillac, philosopher, 1715; William Hutton, local historian and topographer, 1723; Jacques Necker, financier, 1732; Fitzroy James Henry Somerset, first Baron Raglan, field marshal, 1785; Karl Begas, painter, 1794; Frederick Sleigh Roberts, first Earl, field marshal, 1832; Johan Severin Svartensson, composer, 1840; Sir

Charles Villiers Stanford, composer, 1852; William Willett, promoter of daylight saving, 1856; Hermann Sudermann, playwright, 1857; Lewis Milestone, film director, 1865; John James Mackintosh Stewart ("Michael Innes"), literary scholar and author, 1906; David Rydorowich Ostrowski, violinist, 1908; Boris Blatman Capote, author, 1924; Marc Bolan (Mark Feld), singer, songwriter and bandleader, 1947; Deaths: Sir Jerome, 42; Sir Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, poet, murdered, 1628; Henry King, poet and prelate, 1669; George Whitefield, religious leader, 1770; James Brindley, canal engineer, 1772; Augustin-François Caen Pruvost de Saint-Hilaire, botanist and traveller, 1853; Franz Adam, painter, 1866; Georges-Ernest Jean-Marie Bouleau, general and politician, committed suicide, 1891; Charles Nopier Henry, painter, 1917; Frederick Edward Roberts, first Earl of Birkenhead, 1930; The *Morning Post* newspaper was last issued, 1937;

Sir Robert Hadfield, metallurgist, 1940; Richard Austin Freeman, author and creator of "Dr John Thorndyke", 1943; Lewis Fry Richardson, physicist, 1953; James Dean, actor, killed, 1955; Simone Signoret (Simone Kaminker), actress, 1965. On this day: the Siege of Yorktown began, 1781; Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute* was first performed, Vienna, 1791; the University of Berlin was opened, 1810; Bizet's opera *The Pearl Fishers* was first performed, Paris, 1863; artificial silk (rayon) first patented, 1902; the Balkan League was formed by Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro, 1912; Benito Mussolini formed the first Fascist government in Italy, 1922; the discovery of penicillin was first announced, 1928; the first experimental television broadcast by the BBC took place, 1929; Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess* was first performed, Boston, 1935; the *Morning Post* newspaper was last issued, 1937;

Germany and the USSR signed a pact agreeing on the partition of Poland, 1939; identity cards were issued in Britain, 1940; a British Expeditionary Force of 158,000 men was sent to France, 1939; after 277,264 flights the Berlin air lift ended, 1949; Cinerama was first exhibited by the inventor, Fred Waller, in New York, with the feature entitled *This Is Cinerama*, 1952; Botswana became independent, 1966; Radio 1 of the BBC broadcast for the first time, 1967. Today is the Feast Day of St Gregory the Enlightener, St Hunorius of Canterbury, St Jerome and St Simon of Crepy.

## LECTURES

**Victoria and Albert:** Sudeshna Guha, "The British period in India II", 2.30pm.

**Institute of Economic Affairs:** Conal Craig, "Re-inventing Adoption", 6.30pm.

**ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS**

The Princess Royal, President, Animal Trust Annual Equestrian Awards Ceremony, London W1; as Vice-President, the Chartered Institute of Transport, attends the Past President's Dinner at the Royal W.C.C., Princess Alexandra Street, London W1; Princess Alexandra visits St. Rose and Cromarty, and opens the Puffin Hydrotherapy Pool, Dingwall.

**Changing of the Guard**

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Guard, Horse Guards, 11am.

**APPOINTMENTS**

Lord Goff of Chiooley, to be Senior Lord of Appeal in Ordinary.

Mr Francis Gordon, to be Ambassador to the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria.

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# Footsie confounds expectations but could still hit 4,000 soon

The stock market has acquired many disconcerting habits over the years - a failure to live up to widely held expectations is one.

At the start of last week almost every marketman and his dog believed Footsie would soon enjoy a storming run to 4,000 points. They were wrong. Shares have dithered and dallied and the magical 4,000 remains unchallenged.

As Ian Williams at Panmure Gordon says: "It was inevitable that a week which started with near-unanimity that the FTSE 100 index would break through the 4,000 barrier has ended in disappointment.

"When so many market participants agree on something, it is as good as guaranteed not to happen. The theory was that there was no economic data on the immediate horizon to upset the bond markets and that encouraging company results would continue to push the index further into new

high ground. Both assumptions were flawed."

Nobody had expected an official, unofficial US source to gently remind the world that transatlantic interest rates would soon be going up, and company results, although at least matching expectations, failed to inspire the market.

Worries about higher US rates will hang around until they happen, probably after the presidential elections. In this country there may be further reductions, although with the economy continuing to strengthen the arguments for a hike are becoming less convincing.

This week starts with the market no longer besotted by thoughts of a dash to 4,000. It's almost a case of once bitten, twice shy. Yet, if the contrary theory holds, Footsie could well enjoy a surge to - even beyond - the 4,000 milestone in the next five sessions.

The undertone remains firm, strengthening the expec-

tation the index should - in the near future - manage the 4,000 spectacular.

Then, according to the so often inaccurate herd forecast, things are likely to deteriorate. Most strategists see little progress beyond 4,000 at least until the election is out of the way.

Shares which are not in the exclusive Footsie club could take up the running. The mid-cap shares which make up the FTSE 250 index have had a sluggish time since peaking in April.

There are, however, worries about the thinly traded tickers on the Alternative Investment Market. Institutional support, overfusome, is now almost non-existent.

Any institution with a large slab of stock in an AIM company realises there is little chance of bailing out without devastating the price. So they are, in effect, locked in.

AIM - and the unregulated

nated advisers - every AIM company must have one - were not complaining of overwork and making new comers form an orderly queue. One entrepreneur with a business to float moaned last week he was unable to find a nominated adviser willing and able to start work on his share sale before February.

The AIM jam is renewing interest in the old fashioned reverse takeover of a shell company. A number of such deals are being prepared.

It's fairly quiet on the company results front this week. House of Fraser, the Army & Navy and Dickins & Jones department stores chain, is unlikely to add to any feel-good factor.

An increased interim loss of £7m is expected, although there are hopes the dividend will be held at 17p.

The company, once part of the Paved empire which still embraces Harrods, was floated at what was regarded as a cut price 180p in July 1994. The shares closed last week at 161.5p, pushed a little by takeover speculation. There are hopes that Burton, which has made an outstanding success of the Debenhams department stores chain, could be interested.

Chairman Brian McGowan, one of the founders of the Williams Holdings conglomerate, found himself forced to make sweeping management changes in April in a desperate bid to put new life into the ailing stores group.

He appointed John Cole, a former Tesco Homecare managing director, as chief executive. He in turn has recruited fresh faces and instigated one of those strategic

reviews without which a new management team feels undressed. The group has also sacked SBC Warburg, which undertook the flotation, as its financial adviser and stockbroker. Merrill Lynch is the new adviser and UBS assumed the stockbroking role.

This week's figures will reflect the failings of the former regime. It is possible Mr Cole will be able to sprinkle a little cheer around with details of a new strategy. John Richards and Sean Eddie at NatWest Securities say: "With expectations so low and the absence to date of the customary honeymoon period enjoyed by the retail management there is scope for surprises."

The

only

heavyweight

on the reporting list is Bank of Scotland. It is expected to produce interim figures of £294m, up from £262m.

Blenheim, the exhibitions group, may be hard pressed to

confer its profit statement to

figures; hopes of takeover action are likely to dominate the proceedings.

The company has twice in recent months confessed it has received bid approaches. The first set of talks, thought to be with United News & Media, came to nothing. The second approach number two with Reed International and US interests thought to be in the frame. There is a good chance the bid will be announced with Wednesday's interim figures which, although overshadowed, will be striking, say £25m against £13m.

Some believe Blenheim is holding out for too much; there is talk it is demanding 550p a share. Highest they have been in the past 12 months is 468p.

HTV has yet to declare any bid approaches but with the expected upheavals in the media industry it is high on the market's hit list. Interim profits are likely to emerge at £6.4m, up an unimpressive 5 per cent.

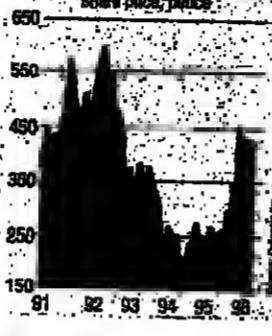
## STOCK MARKET WEEK

### DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year



## GLENHEIM GROUP



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# 18 business

THE INDEPENDENT • Monday 30 September 1996

BUSINESS NEWS DESK: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171 293 2098

## British Gas set for £250m Scottish sale

MAGNUS GRIMOND

British Gas is negotiating the sale of its Scottish and north of England supply business to Scottish Hydro in a £250m deal that would mark a dramatic escalation of moves to break up the integrated gas group. It is already due to spin off its gas supply and trading businesses next year as part of its attempts to escape the intense regulatory and financial pressures it is currently facing.

It has also emerged that British Gas is this week almost certain to ask for a Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation into the controversial new pricing regime unveiled earlier this year by Clare Spottiswoode, director general of Ofgas, which it claims will slash its revenues by £650m a year.

Neither side would comment yesterday, but it is understood the talks with Scottish Hydro have been under way for some months, with a conclusion expected as early as this week, after an unofficial approach to the Office of Fair Trading to as-

certain the attitude of the competition authorities.

No widespread job losses are expected to result from any sale, which would see the transfer of BG's entire domestic gas business in Scotland, Northumberland and Cumbria, supplying around 2.3 million homes. However, it is thought that Hydro would not take on responsibility for any of the onerous "take or pay" gas contracts with North Sea producers which have already forced it to pay £650m for gas it has not used.

The deal would see several thousand employees from the gas group's 40,000-strong work force move over to Scottish Hydro, which would in future handle gas supply, meter reading, billing and servicing, although some of these activities would continue to be handled by British Gas during a handover period.

News of the talks comes just two months after Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, the Hydro chairman and former governor of Hong Kong, said that by increasing year-end gearing of 25 per cent, the group

would be able to release £500m to expand its business.

He told shareholders at the group's annual meeting: "Your board takes the view that there are many opportunities to maintain our high rate of expansion by investing such funds carefully in new projects. Our major institutional shareholders have made it clear that they agree with this policy if the investment is in expansion."

One insider said over the weekend that there was "not a prayer" that the group will accept the Ofgas proposals, despite the concessions offered by the regulator last month. A meeting last week between Philip Rogerson, BG deputy chairman, and Ofgas failed to find any common ground between the two sides.

The gas group claims the changes offered by the regulator result in a 3 per cent improvement in revenues compared with the original terms of the regulatory formula, which it says is "not material". It is also being suggested that a referral will scupper Ms Spottiswoode's plans to bring forward the extension of domestic gas competition.

Power base: Scottish Hydro wants to add new investments to its hydro-electric business

## US fears single currency will slow European growth

DIANE COYLE  
Washington

The US expressed concerns this weekend that moves towards a single currency will lead to slower growth in Europe. Robert Rubin, US Treasury Secretary, said: "We all affirmed the importance of continuing to direct policies towards sustaining non-inflationary growth. We recognise this requires credible programmes to reduce fiscal deficits in a medium term context."

However, the Americans

used the G7 meeting in Washington this weekend to focus on the implications of the single currency for the world economy, having decided that policy in the run-up to the single currency had become a live issue.

The US is keen to see lower interest rates in Europe to avert the danger that tighter budgets will slow growth, but ran into some resistance from the Germans. "We had a good, frank discussion of where the economies are going," said Kenneth Clarke, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

But the meeting did produce a consensus that the world economy is in a satisfactory state, with steady non-inflationary growth in prospect in most regions. Mr Clarke said the Treasury's forecast of 2.5 per cent growth in the UK this year looked credible and the recovery would strengthen as the year went on. The fact that it had been growing below trend justified his decision not to move interest rates at the last monetary meeting, he said.

The G7 also reached agree-

ment on how to finance the plan to lift the debt burden on poor countries. The Paris Club of individual governments, owed money by third world nations unexpectedly agreed to write off up to 80 per cent of what is owed by qualifying countries. Although there is some doubt about how much of the Paris Club debt will qualify for such a big concession, it had not been expected to give an explicit figure.

The one remaining query is whether or not the IMF will

have to sell 5 million ounces of its 104 million ounce gold reserves at some point in the future, and reinvest the interest to finance its share of the debt packages. Omar Davies, Jamaica's finance minister, speaking for Commonwealth ministers, said: "None of us believes this is adequate. But rather than compare where we are with where we should be, you have to compare it with where we are coming from."

Separately, Mr Clarke yesterday introduced an initiative

to alter the IMF's articles. He urged that the fund should have as part of its purpose encouraging the liberalisation of capital flows, as these become an increasingly dominant feature of the world economy.

In his statement to the IMF's interim committee, which takes all the key housekeeping decisions, the Chancellor said the articles of agreement "should be revised to give it an explicit mission to encourage further capital account liberalisation and to help members secure the

benefits of free capital movements.

He also called for all countries to publish their annual "Article IV" consultation with the IMF, as Britain did for the first time this summer.

The Interim Committee yesterday finalised the IMF's new emergency overdraft facility, set up in response to the Mexico crisis. The New Arrangements to Borrow have brought in money from increasingly important economies such as Korea and Singapore.

Morgan Grenfell has taken control of six of these holding companies and established it owns huge stakes in a number of Scandinavian firms.

But the ownership of Russ Oil is causing controversy, with some sources claiming a clear line of control to Morgan Grenfell Jersey, while others believe it may have been personally owned by Mr Young.

The contents of Mr Young's Jersey bank account are also being analysed, amid reports that at least £2m is kept there.

## Bass joins the rush to the themed bar

NIGEL COPE

Bass has joined Whitbread and Rank in the rush by Britain's large leisure companies to buy up the booming themed bar and restaurant sector. It has emerged that Bass made a unsuccessful bid to buy the Pitcher & Piano chain of bars earlier this year but lost out to Marston, Thompson & Everard. Marston secured the seven outlets for £20m in June.

Bass had wanted to convert the chain to its fast-growing All Bar One format and introduce its own management. The bid failed because the Marstons offer was higher and allowed the existing Pitcher & Piano management, including founder Crispin Tweddell, to remain on board.

Bass declined to comment on any approach for the chain but said it was committed to the rapid expansion of All Bar One, which currently has 15 outlets. "We're looking for good sites in London, the South-east and the suburbs," the company said.

The Bass move is further evidence that brewing and leisure groups are prepared to pay fancy prices for themed pubs and restaurants rather than develop their own sites.

Other recent deals have seen Whitbread buy the Café Rouge group, Greene King buy The Magic Pub company and Rank acquire the Tom Colquhoun pub chain.

Speculation has turned to other targets for Bass, which could include pub groups Re-

gent Inns and JD Wetherspoon and restaurant chains Harry Ramsden's and Pizza Express.

All Bar One is a similar concept to the Pitcher & Piano. Both are bright and modern bars aimed at young, trendy drinkers. They also have a high level of food sales. The first All Bar One opened in 1994 in Sutton, Surrey. Most are in London and the South-east though there are outlets in Leeds, Sheffield and Birmingham.

The Pitcher & Piano deal would have given Bass a shortcut to expansion. It could switch targets and buy a different chain though these are now trading on exorbitant ratings. The alternative is to find suitable sites for conversion from its existing pubs.

Though Bass has a large chain



Following a theme: Sir Ian Prosser, Bass chairman and chief executive

of pubs, the brewer needs high street sites in the South-east for the All Bar One outlets and this is an area where Bass is under-

represented. "We are looking almost exclusively for new sites rather than conversions," Bass said. Bass is also growing its Fork

& Pitcher group of traditional village pubs. There are now over 40 with the number expected to double by the end of the year.

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& Pitcher group of traditional village pubs. There are now over 40 with the number expected to double by the end of the year.

## Leisure giants desperate for a slice of the eating-out market

TOM STEVENSON  
City Editor

The acquisition of Tom Cobleigh's "upscale" pubs for nice people" by Rank last week, hot on the heels of Whitbread snapping up the Pelican chain of French-style brasseries in August, confirms the increasing desperation of the big leisure companies to muscle in on the fast-growing eating-out market.

Bass tried and failed to buy the Pitcher & Piano chain and it emerged last week that Oriental Restaurants Group, the City-based Chinese and Thai restaurants chain, was made an "extremely attractive" offer before it had even got

round to announcing its own £1.4m flotation.

It's easy to see why the big players are so keen to buy not just the sites but the expertise and vision that created these chains. According to the Henley Centre, consumer spending on eating out is forecast to rise from £16.2bn in 1992 to £29.6bn in 2001.

Against that background, it is no surprise that Whitbread gen-

erates 86 per cent of its profits from retailing and only 14 per cent from brewing. Nor that it should have snapped up so many brands that its portfolio now includes Café Rouge, Dome, TGI Friday's, Pizza Hut, Beefeater and Brewers Fayre.

Rank is planning a big expansion of its Hard Rock Cafe chain and now owns Tom

Cobleigh. Bass is rolling out its newest bar concept All Bar One as fast as it can.

But with the market growing as fast as it is, the big players are increasingly taking the view that they cannot grow their own brands quickly enough and do not want to take the risk of pouring money into a dull brand while their competitors start a march on them. While it is proving an expensive option to buy ready-made brands, with a proven track record the big companies are prepared to take a bit of flak from the City initially to eliminate the risk of going it alone.

That, in turn, has been behind a bonanza year for some of the already quoted chains of both pubs and restaurants as the City has played a game of spot the target. As the table shows, the gains over the past year have been breathtaking, ranging from Harry Ramsden's impressive 54 per cent rise to Pizza Express's mouthwatering 20 per cent increase.

Arguably, on price/earnings ratios in the 20s and even 30s, the market has overreached expectations. To pay a premium to current prices, Whitbread, Bass or Rank would have to stump up prices that their shareholders would be likely to balk at. In investment as in life, the best time to leave a party is while everyone is still enjoying themselves.

## IN BRIEF

• Brands Hatch Leisure, owner of the famous motor racing circuit of the same name, is to be valued at up to £40m in a stock market flotation. The company, which also owns the Cadwell Park, Oulton Park and Snetterton tracks, is to raise at least £3m in the placing, which will put a value of around £4m on the stake held by Nicola Foulston, chief executive. The Foulston family bought the business 10 years ago, although Apax Partners, the venture capital group, is now the major shareholder. The group, which also operates rally and four-wheel drive schools, will use the money to broaden the range of its activities.

• London's County Hall is to be redeveloped as two hotels under the Marriott and Travel Inn banners. Whitbread, the brewing and leisure group which secured the Marriott franchise three months ago, said it was planning a 200-room four-star hotel on the historic site, with a 200-room Travel Inn alongside to cater for the budget end of the market. The Marriott, which will include a 200-delegate conference room and a 20,000 square foot leisure club, is expected to be completed in 1998.

• London has overtaken Birmingham as the place most top executives would like to do business. The capital was ranked first out of 24 British cities and cities, coming out as clear leader for the availability of a quality workforce and its overall business environment in a survey by Black Horse Relocation and Management Today magazine. Access to a quality workforce was seen as the most important attribute by nearly half of the survey respondents. Newcastle came out top in terms of the cost and availability of business property and the level of overheads like wages and rates.

• Confidence in the retailing industry is on a six-year high, underpinning an upturn in employment prospects in the fourth quarter. A survey by Manpower, the employment agency, shows that 70 per cent of employers are forecasting an increase in jobs, with 10 per cent looking for a downturn, leaving a net balance of 5 percentage points up on last year. Within that, 62 per cent of retailers are looking for a rise, against just 2 per cent expecting a fall.

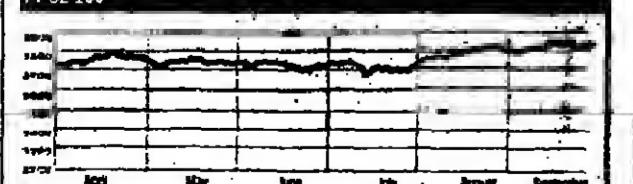
• Dravid, an information technology group founded in 1987 by David Thompson, is to float with a value of between £40m and £60m. Mr Thompson, who mortgaged his house to start the business after leaving General Electric of the US, will own a stake worth around £4.8m after the placing and is also raising around £1.2m by selling shares. The group is said to be one of the UK's leading managing consultancies specialising in the implementation of integrated IT systems, with customers which include the American GE, Guest, Unilever and Guinness. Profits jumped 130 per cent to £3m last year.

• UK businesses are failing to respond to increasing levels of stress - estimated to be costing British industry £79bn a year (£2,773 for every UK employee), according to a survey of occupational stress cream. Even companies that do take stress seriously only apply with employee well-being and staff turnover featuring at the bottom of the list of motivating factors. Most businesses are looking and about the same proportion are simply fearful of litigation.

• Rover is understood to be planning a £350m engine plant near Birmingham following the award of a £60m grant from the government to keep the factory in Britain. Ian Lang is expected to announce the project at the Tory Party conference next week. Last year Ford threatened to build a new Jaguar plant in the US unless it was given £80m in state aid towards the cost of the site.

## STOCK MARKETS

### FTSE 100

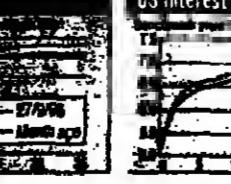


| Indices      | Close    | Wk's Chg | Chg %pt | 1996 High | 1996 Low | Ytd Chg |
|--------------|----------|----------|---------|-----------|----------|---------|
| FTSE 100     | 3946.40  | -17.7    | -0.4    | 3977.20   | 3832.30  | 3.94    |
| FTSE 250     | +462.20  | -22.0    | -0.5    | 4568.60   | 4015.30  | 3.43    |
| FTSE 350     | 1968.40  | -9.0     | -0.5    | 1985.80   | 1816.50  | 3.83    |
| FT Small Cap | 2170.08  | -18.4    | -0.8    | 2244.36   | 1954.06  | 3.12    |
| FT All Share | 1943.93  | -9.5     | -0.5    | 1981.01   | 1791.95  | 3.78    |
| New York *   | 5872.92  | -15.5    | -0.3    | 5984.74   | 5023.64  | 2.16    |
| Tokyo        | 2157.03  | +434.8   | +2.1    | 2266.80   | 1974.70  | 0.741   |
| Hong Kong    | 11159.39 | +167.0   | +1.4    | 11759.39  | 10204.57 | 3.49    |
| Frankfurt    | 2659.03  | +12.0    | +0.5    | 2666.55   | 2253.36  | 1.731   |

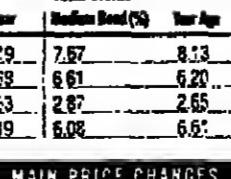
Source: FT Information

## INTEREST RATES

### UK interest rates



### US interest rates

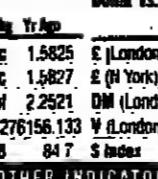


## CURRENCIES

### £/S



### Dollar vs.





GAVYN DAVIES

'In the UK, there is no frenzy of preparation, just a desire to delay. Unless this prevarication ends immediately after polling day, our lack of preparation will in effect mean that we will have decided to opt out of the first round.'

## We cannot delay the EMU decision much longer

**H**owever hard the Prime Minister tries to bury the European monetary union issue, it refuses to disappear. According to the well informed Philip Stephens of the *Financial Times*, the Chancellor fears that the Prime Minister might "do the dirty" on him before the election. The fear is that John Major will rule out sterling's participation in the first round of EMU at a moment when it is too late for Kenneth Clarke to resign, perhaps even during the election campaign itself. This is probably why the Chancellor is raising the stakes now, thus ensuring that an election-losing row would inevitably ensue if Mr Major tried to play this card at the eleventh hour.

Wilder theories are also circulating. For example, some are suggesting that Mr Major might quite soon announce that the UK will not participate in the first round of EMU, with the express intention of actually forcing Mr Clarke to resign. A new Chancellor would then introduce a blatant tax cutting Budget, and the Prime Minister would call an immediate election on a low-tax, anti-Europe, ticket.

Anyone who believes this latter fantasy will believe almost anything. But the fact that it should be seriously suggested demonstrates the extent of the gulf between those who believe the UK should pursue ever closer political and economic links with the EU, and those who believe we should stand aside as

the rest of the EU moves towards federation. The timing of the EMU question is only the latest demarcation line between these two implacably opposed groups.

Pro-Europeans like the Chancellor are ready to end their political careers rather than see the Tory Party fighting the next election on a "save our sterling" ticket. They believe this would effectively determine the direction of the party for the next five years, and even settle the succession after John Major. Therefore, they are determined to maintain that Britain's options must be left open at least until 1998.

But the tenability of the Chancellor's position depends importantly on the precise date at which the UK has to inform the rest of the EU of its decision on monetary union. If this is indeed as late as the spring of 1998 – when the membership will officially be sealed, according to a decision taken at last year's Madrid summit – then the pro-Europeans can readily argue that it is in the UK's interest to delay a resolution of this fight until well after the election. More information will be forthcoming by then, so why act before this is available? If, on the other hand, the decision will have to be taken much earlier – say by next summer – it becomes much less credible to argue for a delay until after the election.

So when is the decision really needed? The Maastricht Treaty says that the UK "may"

inform the Council of its decision to opt into EMU by 1 January 1998. Although this was probably intended by the drafters of the treaty to be a final deadline, the use of the word "may" is rather odd, and clearly leaves a loophole to notify later if the UK chooses. Presumably, the latest possible date would be March or April 1998.

However, it will not be possible for Britain to spring this decision on the EU, without having taken several preparatory steps well in advance of this date. Least important of these is the question of when to take sterling back into the exchange rate mechanism. The Treaty says that currencies must be in the "normal" bands of the ERM for at least two years prior to the spring of 1998 – ie from six months ago! This seemed definitive when the treaty was drafted (at which time the normal ERM bands were 2.25 per cent either side of the central rate). But the break-up of the old ERM in 1992/93, followed by the introduction of 15 new currency bands for all member currencies, has muddied the waters considerably. The term "normal bands" no longer seems to have much meaning. Some member states may still seek to enforce the two-year rule, but it is unlikely to be a decisive stumbling block to a late UK application.

Much more problematic is the date of statutory independence for the Bank of England,

an inescapable requirement under the treaty. The UK Treasury (which is trying to help the Chancellor by securing the treaty for every nuance which might permit a delayed decision) seems to be of the opinion that the UK could simply promise in the spring of 1998 to make the Bank independent sometime before 1 January 1999.

But Maastricht says quite explicitly (in Article 108) that the relevant legislation must be in the statute book by the time the European Central Bank is established in July 1998. And this means that the legislation would have to be announced by the autumn of 1997 at the latest. This in turn effectively implies that the EMU decision must be taken then, or else the UK will be deciding by default to opt out of the first round.

Then there is the political question of when and how to hold the referendum which both UK parties have now virtually promised. The vote itself could probably be delayed beyond the spring of 1998. (The Germans could hardly object to this, since their own Parliament is due to ratify the final membership list after the crucial deliberations have taken place at EU level.) But a referendum will require the passage of yet another piece of highly contentious legislation in the House of Commons.

This, and the Bank of England Bill, would wipe out the lion's share of Parliamentary time in the 1997/98 session. Announcements to that

effect would have to be made in the Queen's Speech in autumn 1997. This would also be the very last moment at which it would be reasonable to tell the private sector to start the costly preparation for EMU.

No government in its right mind would choose to do all this just in case it wants to join. It would only embark on such a highly charged process if it had already decided to exercise the opt-in. So the bottom line is that the decision will have to be taken when the 1997 Queen's Speech is being planned, which means by the latter part of next summer.

The Rubicon will therefore be crossed within a few months of the General Election, and this will become clear to the electorate before then. Already, the core EMU countries are in a frenzy of preparation for the 1999 start date, and even the governments of countries like Spain and Italy are spending most of their waking hours on the subject. Correspondingly, their chances of joining in the first round are improving all the time.

In the UK, there is no frenzy of preparation, just a desire to delay. Unless this prevarication ends immediately after polling day, our lack of preparation will in effect mean that we will have decided to opt out of the first round.

This is a decision, and a debate, that cannot be delayed much longer, whatever the Chancellor may say.

## Brussels clamps down on Internet loopholes

RICHARD BARRY

British customers using US based on-line services such as MSN, AOL and CompuServe face 17.5 per cent price rises following the planned closure of a tax loophole that has given American Internet service providers an advantage over their British counterparts.

The clamp-down has been given added impetus by fears that British customers may fall outside the protection of European Data Protection acts.

According to the Internet Service Providers Association (ISPA), on-line services with

servers based in America do not have to pass on VAT to their customers because of a loophole in British tax law. The European Commission has agreed to attend to the problem within three months.

The swift response by Brussels is largely due to the fact that anyone who subscribes to a US-based service and gives them confidential information has no recourse under current European legislation.

Currently, if personal data is used for criminal purposes, the Data Protection Registrar, Elizabeth France, can act under UK law. But according to Ms

France, because the data is stored in the US, prosecution would be "very difficult".

The problem was inadvertently illustrated by a security breach at CompuServe last week. A user, who pretended to be a member of CompuServe's staff, told customers that billing information at CompuServe had been lost due to a power surge and a virus. He told customers to re-forward their billing information to him.

Ms France is worried British customers may have to use US courts if the individual uses the data for criminal means. But this could be very costly.



Internet wrangle: Brussels is looking into a VAT loophole that gives US service providers an advantage

## Accountants call for rethink of unwieldy company reports

ROGER TRAPP

Philip Randall, managing partner of Arthur Andersen's

UK audit and business advisory unit, said: "The best annual reports are notable for the quality of information put on the quantity of financial data included. There must be scope for cutting down to give essentially the same information in two places."

The firm points out that the growth in disclosures that has made annual reports average 44 pages, with some well over 100, is a result of rules being set by increasing numbers of bodies.

Recent years have seen the Greenbury and Cadbury Committees and the Accounting

Standards Board as well as company law changes having an impact on what is included.

It is likely that the Hampel Committee (successor to Cadbury), the Auditing Practices Board and the National Association of Pension Funds as well as the ASB will influence future additions to annual accounts.

Arthur Andersen believes that – since many disclosures are not essential for a "true and fair" view to be given – they could be dropped from the statutory financial statements, but made publicly available through a filing with the Stock Exchange, in much the same way as in the United States.

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# How a goldfish keeps its nerve

**MAGI** Research into how animals repair damaged tissue may help spinal injury victims, says Paul Rodgers

**G**oldfish do it, iguanas do it, so why can't the former *Superman* actor Christopher Reeve and other spinal injury victims do it too - regenerate their damaged nerve cells? The question, which has long perplexed neurologists, may finally have an answer - and with it a possible new treatment for paralysis.

It is our ability to even ask such questions that is at the heart of the problem. According to Professor Michael Schwartz at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel, mammalian nerve cells have traded a talent for regeneration for the ability to learn. In general, the bargain benefits humans, except when injury to the spinal cord - the 45cm, finger-thick bundle of nerves running through 38 vertebrae - leaves us without feeling or the use of our limbs.

Schwartz's theory is based on the earlier discovery that the action of the immune system is suppressed in the brain. She says this is partly because the process of learning involves rewiring the billions of connections between neurons. An automatic repair mechanism that returned this network of nerve cells to its original form would cause something akin to amnesia. "Clearly you don't want interference from outside systems," she said.

This may explain the goldfish's

famous short memory - said to last only as long as it takes to swim around a bowl. Its immune system may be wiping its memory as it swims.

But this leads to the idea that the same suppression of the immune system in higher organisms also stops regrowth of the neurons, which occur in the brain, spinal column and optic nerve. Experiments by Schwartz and her team offer evidence that this is the case, and also suggest a way of getting around the problem.

One of the curiosities of spinal injuries is that the damage done to the nerves tends to be greater than would be expected from the initial injury itself. With ordinary organs, such as the skin, the first reaction to damage is the release of chemical messengers which attract macrophages, cells in the immune system that gobble up foreign bodies and the remains of dead cells, to the site of the wound. These release hormones which promote regrowth of the damaged cells. The arrival of the macrophages is visible even to the non-scientific eye, being signalled by swelling.

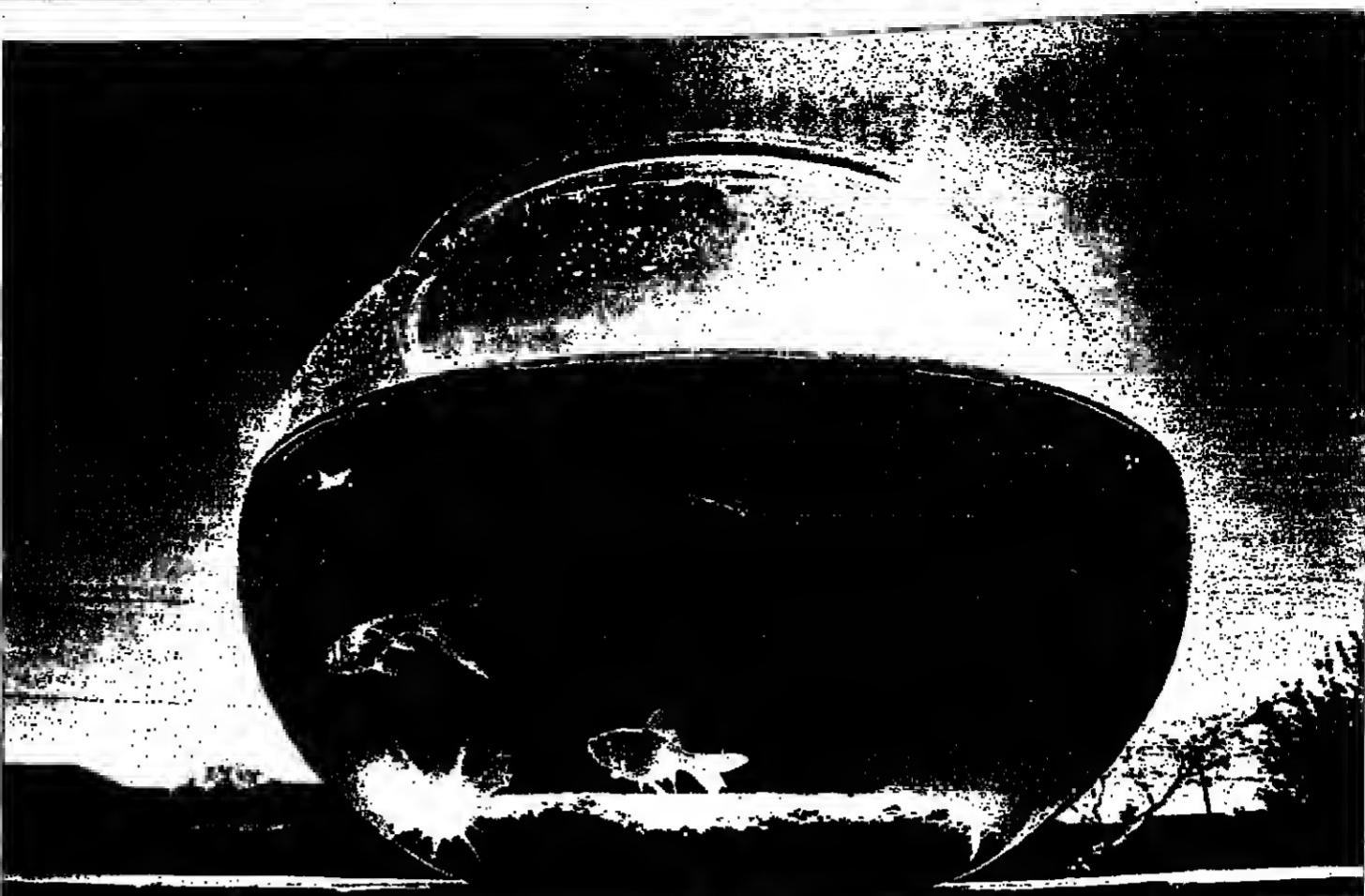
But when spinal nerves are damaged, the swelling is much less than in other parts of the body. Schwartz found that the nerve cells were giving off a chemical - she dubbed it Immune Privilege Factor - that discouraged macrophages from

coming to the site of the injury, and stopped them from doing their work if they did show up.

Without the macrophages to effect a cleaning operation, toxins released from dead cells went on to damage neighbouring healthy ones. The suppressed macrophages also appeared to release highly reactive free radicals, which added to the damage. Without the hormonal doses, the remaining nerve cells made no effort to rebuild connections across the damaged section.

The odd thing is that this does not apply to parts of the nerve cells that extend to the rest of the body. The long tendrils known as axons that connect one nerve cell to another can stretch the length of the spinal column, or to the extremities of the body. If a cut on your finger severs an axon, the immune system reacts normally and the damage is repaired.

In Schwartz's experiments, the neurons of a rat's optical nerve were severed. She took blood samples from the animal, separated the macrophages, and in a test tube exposed a damaged axon from elsewhere in the rat's body to them. The macrophages became activated; when they were then injected into the damaged optic nerve, they began removing the debris of the dead cells and releasing their healing hormones.



Schwartz is cautious about predicting a cure for paralysis, though she does think doctors will eventually use a technique similar to her own. It is theoretically possible to come up with a drug that blocks Immune Privilege Factor. The problem would be to keep it from spreading to other parts of the central nervous system, where it could play havoc with memory and learned responses. Injected macrophages might also spread to some extent, though probably not as far.

Other researchers favour a drug-based approach. Schwartz says her work is based in part on earlier studies by Professor Schwab at the Swiss Institute for Brain Research. He has not only identified two growth inhibitors, but also developed antibodies to block them. Treated with these, axons that would normally sprout for a millimetre and then halt will keep growing for a centimetre.

An effective clinical treatment, however, is years away. Schwartz measured her success by counting the new fibres that had grown across the surgical cut made in her rat's optical nerves. It did not measure how well the new connections were working - something the team is now trying to discover.

Another question is whether the treatment works only when a wound is fresh. If so, it would be of little help to Mr Reeve and others who have been injured in the past. But it could provide a new life for future victims of spinal injury.



If goldfish can regenerate damaged nerve tissues, why can't the actor Christopher Reeve, left, and other spinal injury victims? Unfortunately, mammalian nerve cells have traded a talent for regeneration for an ability to learn

Photograph (top): David Sandison

## When the Moon meets the Sun on a tropical island ...

**Nigel Henbest and Heather Couper** have seen total eclipses from exotic locations. Next month, we'll get a lunchtime treat in Britain

**H**ot on the heels of last Thursday night's lunar eclipse comes a comparative rarity: an eclipse of the Sun, on Saturday, 12 October. What is even more unusual is that it will be easily visible from the British Isles, and it even takes place at a civilised time of day - around luncheon time. The bad news is that the eclipse will not be total, so there will be no dramatic sights of a blacked-out Sun surrounded by its faint outer atmosphere. But it will be the best eclipse of the Sun visible in Britain since 1961.

Solar eclipses happen because of a weird coincidence: the Sun and Moon appear almost exactly the same size in the sky. In fact, the Sun is 400 times larger than the Moon - but it is also 400 times further away. Twice a year, the Moon crosses the disc of the Sun. If you are in precisely the right spot on Earth (to within a few kilometres), you will see the Moon overlap the Sun. That is when you get a total eclipse.

It is a cliché, but nothing prepares you for the experience of totality. We have witnessed two total eclipses: from a small

island in Indonesia, and from the top of the Big Island of Hawaii. The first thing you notice as the Moon moves inexorably across the Sun's disc is that the quality of light changes. It takes on a flat, artificial appearance, a bit like a film set.

Minutes before the eclipse, it starts to get colder, and seconds before, you see the shadow of the Moon racing across the landscape in your direction. Then the whole world changes. Replacing the bright, dependable Sun in the sky is a pitch-black intruder - like a Chinese death-mask. All around, frozen crimson flames, great gas-chambers called prominences, flicker at its edges. And surrounding the whole is the Sun's outer atmosphere, the exquisite pearly corona, which fans away to invisibility against the darkened sky.

The scene lasts just minutes. As the Moon moves away, sun-light bursts through, creating the glorious "diamond ring effect". Night turns into day - and you wonder if you imagined it all.

Although the 12 October eclipse does not come into this category - it will not be total anywhere on Earth - the Moon will still bite a respectable chunk out of the Sun. In London, 61 per cent of the Sun will be obscured; in Edinburgh, 64 per cent.

Because the eclipse is not total, you must be careful how you watch it. With nearly 40 per cent of sunlight still getting through, the Sun will still be dangerous to look at directly.

You can observe the eclipse safely indoors by allowing a chunk of sunlight through a hole in a blind, which forms a miniature "pinhole camera".

image of the Sun. It's also safe to view through a special eclipse filter - but DO NOT use exposed photographic film (a favourite method in past years) because modern colour emulsions allow some of the Sun's harmful radiation through.

The last eclipse to rival this one was in 1961, when Londoners saw 91 per cent of the Sun covered up (86 per cent in Edinburgh). The most recent total eclipse in the UK was on 29 June 1927, lasting a mere 24 seconds over North Wales and the north of England. The

weather was appalling that day, and the eclipse was a wash-out. Only a few people got to see it.

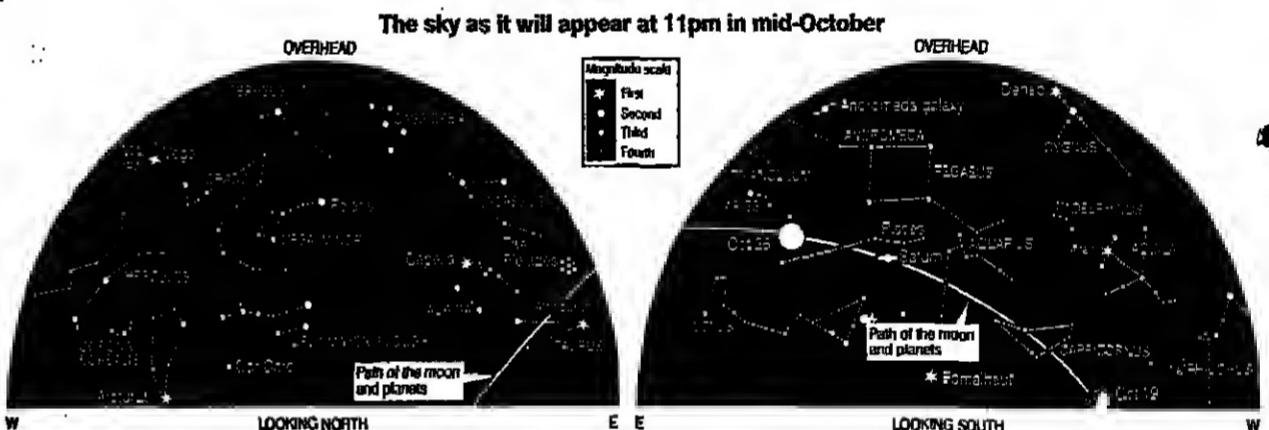
Those keen to see the next total eclipse visible from these shores have but a few years to wait. In the morning of 11 August 1999, a total eclipse lasting between one and two minutes (depending where you are) will sweep over the Scilly Isles, south Devon, Cornwall, and the island of Alderney. After that, it takes off for Europe; but the best place to be is between Falmouth and Penzance, where the eclipse will last for 122 seconds.

Hotels in the area are already reporting heavy bookings. So, if you want to see the celestial spectacle of a lifetime, get in there quickly - or you will have to wait until 2031 for the next British total eclipse.

Those interested in British eclipses will be fascinated by UK Solar Eclipses from Year 1, by Sheridan Williams (£11.95 plus £1 p&p, from Clock Tower Press, PO Box 5010, Leighton Buzzard, Beds. LU7 0ZZ).

**What's Up?**

Brilliant Jupiter now hangs in



the south-west during the early evening, setting by 10pm. As its glory days fade for this year, all the attention is focusing on Saturn. It is visible all night long, and lies high in the south at midnight. A telescope will reveal the famous rings, and at least one moon.

**October diary (all times BST)**  
3 Mercury at greatest western elongation  
4 1.05pm Moon at last quarter  
12 3.15pm New Moon  
21 Maximum of Orionid meteor shower  
Partial eclipse of the Sun (exact times depend on position within the UK: Edinburgh 1.49 to 4.21pm, London 1.59 to 4.31pm)  
19 7.10pm Moon at first quarter  
21 Maximum of Orionid meteor shower  
26 3.12pm Full Moon  
27 2am British Summer Time ends



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The CF-62. The safest notebook PC ever invented. It's the only notebook PC in the world with a rewritable, removable optical disc. This conveniently sized 650 Mb disc called PO, can with ease safely protect the data on your PC Notebook from any loss or failure, however unexpected. Your hard drive can automatically be backed up onto a PO disc which has the same storage capacity

as 450 floppy discs. The CF-62 has all the quality and specifications you would expect from a state-of-the-art notebook PC including Pentium 133 MHz processor, 1.35 Gb HDO, 1024 x 864 high resolution 12.1" TFT screen, PC card slots with ZV port and CD ROM Drive. To find out more about the world's first multi-media notebook with PO Drive call 0500 491777. Let's be careful out there. **Panasonic** Notebook Computer

**THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD**

No. 3099, Monday 30 September By Portia

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| 18 |    | 19 |    |    |   |
| 20 | 21 |    | 22 | 23 |   |
| 24 |    | 25 |    |    |   |

**CROSS**

7 Ropy transport system? (5,3)  
9 Bound to react quickly (4,2)  
10 Dry part of grotto we locate (5)  
11 Significantly, is unoccupied we hear (3,5)  
12 He'd make no issue about complaint (10,4)

15 Still so full of rubbishy stuff (6)  
16 Art work assembled bit by bit (6)  
18 Anyway, I can't hasten end of rising (2,3,9)  
20 Lock-keeper? (8)  
22 Personal assistant ringing cardinal privately (5)  
24 Gun law, by the sound of it (6)

**DOWN**

1 Following campaign by safety-first groups (8)  
2 Stream's a foot deep (4)  
3 Second-class letter one gets in the Far East (6)  
4 Move fast, ready to grab line (4)  
5 Contract worker gains control (4,4)  
6 Equal notice taken of religious adherent (6)  
8 British one brought into line with European plant (9)  
13 Small amount of sulphur's importance (10)  
14 May be part of a building block (9)  
17 Study answer husband gets (8)  
18 One's sick of a North African city (6)  
19 Due to receive each fine (6)  
21 Embarrassed about new split (4)  
23 Run away from brawl with a Greek character (4)